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PROPÆDEIA PROPHETICA

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"All that a writer upon the evidences, strictly taken, can do, and all, indeed, that he ought to attempt, is to show that the *facts* related in the New Testament were believed at the very time by those that were present."—PROPÆDEIA, Pt. II. c. 8, p. 260.

"The business of Prophecy was not to prove the truth or actuality of any facts however wonderful, but to assist men in explaining their cause or design when exhibited."—Ibid., Pt. II. c. 5, p. 211.

"I can imagine," says Paley, "no more certain proof of design, than the preparation or providing beforehand of things to be used only after some time, for this implies a contemplation of the future that belongs to intelligence alone" (and in the Historical order to *Divine* Intelligence—ED.).—Ibid., Pt. III., p. 414.



# PROPÆDEIA PROPHETICA

OR

## *THE USE AND DESIGN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT EXAMINED*

BY

WILLIAM ROWE LYALL, D.D.

SOMETIME DEAN OF CANTERBURY

*NEW EDITION, WITH NOTICES BY*

GEORGE C. PEARSON, M.A., CH. CH.

HON. CANON OF CANTERBURY

*"ἵνα γνωρισθῇ διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος Σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ  
Eph. iii. 10*

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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“ Illi videbant caput, et credebant de corpore, nos videmus corpus,  
et credimus de capite.”

AUG., *Serm. de Ascens.* 292.

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## EDITOR'S NOTICE.

It may be not unacceptable to the reader, to learn so much of an able man, much beloved and revered in his day, whose work is here reprinted, as that he was a younger son of Mr. John Lyall, of Findon, in the county of Sussex, and graduated at Trinity College, Cambridge, on leaving which he entered as student the Inner Temple. In 1812, however, he took Holy Orders, and was ordained to a curacy in the New Forest. There he remained till he removed to London, where his reputation had preceded him. For in 1815 he had contributed to the *Quarterly Review* a discussion of Dugald Stewart's second volume of the "Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind," which had been highly appreciated. This was followed, in 1817, by another paper upon Stewart's "Preliminary Dissertations;" the fruit of wide and disinterested study, and remarkable for a complete mastery of a controversy which, at that moment, occupied the most capable heads in London and in our Universities. It may not be out of place to mention the fact that Hegel, in his "History of Philosophy" (vol. ii. 252-270. Berlin, 1844), has founded almost his whole appreciation of the genius and import of Bacon upon this article, referred to in nearly every page.

Dean Lyall became successively assistant preacher at Lincoln's Inn and at the Temple; he was afterwards Chaplain at St. Thomas' Hospital, and, in 1820, he was appointed, by his eminent friend the late Archbishop Howley, Examining Chaplain. He was also, for several years, editor of the

*British Critic*, and succeeded, at the instance of the Archbishop and Bishop Blomfield, in reconstituting an important work, the "*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*," which had fallen through under the hands of its first projector and editor, Mr. Coleridge.

In 1824 he was appointed Archdeacon of Colchester, and on this occasion he quitted London, returning to deliver from time to time the Warburtonian Lectures, begun 1826, the fruit of which, though quite re-cast, was this volume of the "*Propædeia*," which appeared at last in 1840, and again in 1854. This was the chief literary interest of his later life, which was entirely taken up with diocesan and pastoral and even civil occupation, in which he developed remarkable capacity, especially in the almost complete renovation of the populous but pauperized parish of Hadleigh, half village, half market-town, for which he had resigned two rural cures,—and that in the difficult years which followed the new Poor Law. In 1841 he was transferred to the new Archdeaconry of Maidstone, with a stall in Canterbury Cathedral, where, in 1845, he succeeded Bishop Bagot, as Dean. In 1857, to the regret of many, he died.



## NOTICE.

THE volume now for the third time presented for reflective reading, has been described<sup>1</sup> as a "thoughtful work, published some forty years ago by one whose genial wisdom I recall with grateful pleasure, entitled 'Propædeia Prophetica,' or the 'Preparation of Prophecy.' The special arguments," it is, however, added, "would not perhaps by some minds be considered convincing," and so, neglecting these, the writer confines himself to observations on the title.<sup>2</sup>

The arguments were not found persuasive, for the general reasoning was foreign to the mental habit of the historian. For the rest, these commentaries on Hebrew story, with those of Ewald and others, which they recall, are, as they have proved, deservedly attractive, rich with

<sup>1</sup> "Jewish Church," vol. iii. Pref. xix. xx.

<sup>2</sup> προπαιδεία "preparatory teaching, or training by prophecy." This title, at first, stood quite in the way, even with competent persons, though it now says all to such for itself. "In the same manner," says Clement, "as the Old Testament was a preparation or Propædeia for the Jews, so also were the writings of Socrates and Plato and their followers for the Gentiles." St. Clement, himself a philosopher, was one who, after St. Paul, "to the Greeks became as a Greek." This was, indeed, the common thought of the great ante-Nicene apologists, especially with the meritorious Eusebius, who resumed and completed them with much breadth of civil or political survey. It is the most prominent topic in his "Theophaneia Evangelica," a manifesto put out after the peace of A.D. 313, now happily recovered in the Syriac. This thought was afterwards developed at leisure, in his "Preparatio Evangelica," and completed by his "Demonstratio Evangelica." The two constitute a Propædeia for and Demonstration of the "Theophaneia," or "Verbum caro factum," Himself.

local colour, and really instructive in their grasp and grouping of contemporary detail, and often unexpected analogies. So far as they have an aim it would be to intimate that, by eliminating the superior or Providential element, and by aid of much wealth of illustration, the Scriptures or Scripture characters may be made as interesting and instructive as Herodotus, Thucydides, Dante, or Buddha, Spinoza, Rousseau, Schleiermacher, or Hegel. The Hegelian hypothesis, little compatible in itself with positive piety, impliedly rules most of the writings governed by 'modern thought.'

Whereas the "*Propædeia*" is before all both an argument and a serious exposition; and the point before the writer was that most central and supernatural fact in human annals, viz. the entrance of the Lord Himself, at a certain epoch, into the sequence or pageant of secular events, for the reintegration of man and reclamation of human society—a position, if any could, calling for proof. For this event was not like other great historical crises, explicable enough, after the fact, by a chain of causes not hard to trace, but was the gratuitous and so the incalculable effect of an agency supra-temporal, though operating under all the delays and impurities of time and temporal wills.

The Gospel was no mere development of Mosaism, though built upon its ruins. It had a germ of its own, and the whole function of the Jewish Church—indeed, the act with which it expired—was to prepare man for this intervention, and to authenticate it for what it was, to the intellect of men of good will, when it should be placed upon this planet.

Somewhat thus at dawn, the disc of the sun—not unforeseen and yet a surprise—at once surmounts and supersedes—though other, both in kind and cause—the glow which has announced it, and which has owed whatever of splendour it diffuses to the same.<sup>1</sup> This is no more than to say that

<sup>1</sup> In concluding his "*Life of Cæsar*," Dean Merivale signalizes the characteristic absence from all society of any thought of progress, or anticipation of discovery in happiness or knowledge. The Great Drama would seem played



Jesus was no other than the authentic and adequate exegesis (John i. 17) or enunciation of the Godhead, τὸ θεῖον, or of what is the permanent attitude of the long-ignored Creator towards the self-alienated creature during the whole time of this temporal life, and that as imperturbably as, to use the words of Jesus, His creature the sun bears himself in the physical creation, towards the evil as well as the good. So, on the other hand, the way in which that generation treated Jesus, was no other than what the Father had from the beginning borne from humanity. The sense of this touched good men's hearts.

For, in the words of the profound W. Law, "the desire to communicate good to every creature in the degree in which we can, and it is capable of receiving from us, is a Divine temper, for thus God stands unchangeably towards the whole creation."

By this rehearsal, so to speak, of the Divine attributes in the Person of Christ,—by this fence of fact in which the Lord thought good to approach us,—"by the mission of Himself," was the truth brought home to the conscience and the heart of the now so-named masses. For, to the defeat of humanitarian proclamation, it was from the multitude that the great illumination was received by

out; the last word spoken. "But," says he, "the great Disposer had another leaf to turn in the book of His manifold dispensations. The rise and progress, however, of a new religion, with vigour to control the jarring prejudices of nations and classes, asserting supernatural facts, and claiming Divine authority, appealing with equal boldness on the one hand to history, on the other to conscience, shaping an outward creed, and revealing inward ideas, the law of the simple and the science of the wise, exalting obedience in the place of ambition, and expanding patriotism into philanthropy—was the last offspring of the womb of time that Cæsar could have imagined or Cicero anticipate" (ii. 539. 1850). *Vide* also "State of Judæa on Accession of Augustus," iii. ch. xxix.

I only add to this excellent statement, that this new departure did not start as humanitarian theories would have it, from off the top or flower of cotemporary speculation, but arose from what might have been named the untouched strata of relatively unlettered, erratic, or misled humanity, and that long before its general recognition by professed speculators. Nor was it the creature of thought or reflection, though these were of course among the conditions of its reception.

the thinkers, and not, as it should have been, from thinkers, or from their following by the unlettered. A matter open to the deep and to the simple; but the over-critical do not, at times, 'see the wood for the trees.'

If it should prove some disadvantage to the discussions now brought under notice, to have been composed in view of a public already non-extant, and couched in a tenor less pretending than that of nervous and positive affirmation, they will, it is hoped, be found to meet by anticipation the always respectable scruples of unsophisticated non-believers, with less risk of conflict with modern susceptibilities.

In any case they offer matter to tranquillize and persuade the intelligent and the pious, since reason itself suggests to the creaturely intellect that its first attitude, in presence of so great a boon, is that of piety. Otherwise of what good were a revelation to man as he is?

It was, at any rate, our author's only business to investigate the rational means—and everything resolves itself at last into its reason—by which the claims of the final revelation were brought home to the Jews, who had the refusal; or at least by a Jewish medium, to every human intelligence to whom it should have been promulgated with the moral sufficiency of which the matter admitted. Subordinate, again, in the order of *proof*, to this result, but hardly less essential to the great objective point—the restoration of the intellectual creature—was the multifarious industry of the Divine skill in deigning to interest and bespeak beforehand the *attention* of the creature to a gratuitous boon when at last presented at so unexampled a sacrifice.

The pervading argumentative point, or *motif*, in these discourses is more pointedly exhibited in the Introduction and at the closing page; to wit, that systematic preparation of events, and prophecy when verified in matters historical and moral, are evidence of the agency of intellect, and will in the result, and in such instance of Divine will, no less

cogent than is the evidence of final cause or of design in creation mechanical or anatomical in a hand or an eye.

For the rest, all that may have been justly attributed to the obscurer centuries which ran between Zorobabel and the Herods, while the Divine Word was silent, has been said by none better than by Clement, and by ancient writers after A.D. 313, wonder-stricken with the enormity of the unforeseen. Thus this treatise of the "Propædeia Prophetica," or intrinsic and causative connection of Prophetism with the promulgation of the Gospel, might, as suggested, have been surnamed "Historica"<sup>1</sup> also, were it not for the equivoue so systematic with some which would confuse under one denomination the cotemporary advance of the outer world in letters and speculation, with the divinely prophetic function of Israel. For with humanitarian secularism there is nothing properly either sacred or profane; in any other view, the proficiency exhibited in Hellenic art and speculation contributed no little, in combination with the great work of Roman administration and conquest—the Pax Romana of Eusebius—though in a quite secondary and collateral order, to prepare the 'great consummation.'

This thought, however, does not content ardent and inventive brains, whose part has been already taken. The sacred story must, it seems, be secularized, on pain of falling out of the notice of cultivated man.<sup>2</sup> But vain must

<sup>1</sup> "History" with this school mostly means social or literary research, invaluable in itself but rather apparatus for serious narrative, or else some humanitarian generalization with which we find ourselves put to school, at times not without monitory solemnity, by, it may be, some privat-docent, who may have thriven in but a narrow medium, on pain of passing for "unhistorical." Compare, however, the conception of History given by the "Father of History."—"Clio," c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "To have gathered from all this," says M. Renan, adverting to certain precarious constructions of the German mind, "to have devised from all this a fact, historical and great enough to destroy the credit of the tradition, there needed a singular *parti pris*, or rather that defect of measure in their induction, that in Germany so often mars the rarest qualities of diligence and application. Men repel solid testimony to put feeble hypotheses in their place. Texts the most satisfactory are set aside to make room, without



be, in effect, any industry, were it that of an Ewald, that would compensate from the resources of a vivid fancy for the real absence of the one element which had won for these records, from unsophisticated humanity, the name of "The Book;" for we are not to judge the Old Testament on the principles of philosophical criticism as we should a work by Plato or Cicero. The several books that form the venerable compilation, are not given as a treatise upon religion or morality, but as the depository or record of a communication from God to man; to be a means by which, in the process of ages, mankind were to be brought to the knowledge and belief of things, deeply concerning their happiness, and such as they could never learn except by revelation. This is not the same sort of end which is proposed in other books; and, therefore, these writings are not to be subjected to the same rules of comparison, but must be dealt with on an hypothesis of their own.

Notwithstanding, however, any gesture of perfunctory dismissal, more than one intimation from quarters deserving regard having invited the reproduction of this volume, I am serving, it is hoped, the interests of the limited number of the studious, by bringing its contents once more under the public notice. One might add to this the welcome circumstance, that more than one accredited writer would seem, by the inostensible suffrage of tacit recourse, to have recognized what is called the actuality

examination, for venturous combinations of a complaisant archæology. Somewhat *new*, this is what must be had at any price, though the novelty be won by the exaggeration of ideas, not seldom just and penetrating in themselves. I am far from ignoring the services rendered by Germany in our difficult province, only there is need to look very closely into the matter, and to bring with you a great spirit of discrimination. Above all, make up your mind to take no account whatever of the haughty criticisms of men with a system who treat you for an ignoramus, and one far behindhand, because you admit not all of a heap the latest novelty hatched from the brain of some young doctor, good, at the very best, for a stimulus to research within the circle of the erudite." No scholar owes more to Tübingen than M. Renan, and it is pleasant to have the accomplished minister of negation make so naively his *own* confession in the name of his church.—"Les Evangiles," Preface, pp. xxxiv. xxxv. 1877.

of topics, never too familiar perhaps, but put out some years ago with prescient concern, while existing anxieties were at rest, and when the title itself was deemed a disadvantageous preliminary to the exposition,

“Τὸ πρὶν ἐπ’ εἰρήνης πρὶν ἐλθεῖν διὰς Ἀχαιῶν.”

Not that these pages are now presented with the view of directly confuting writers mostly, as it would seem, set up on a basis, so incompatible with what has hitherto passed as the Gospel, as is the “*Philosophie der Geschichte.*”<sup>1</sup> Attention is, indeed, invited to the providential place held by remote occurrences of which, notwithstanding the feats of learned ingenuity, and there is no lack of general learning, we have no account whatever outside the Bible—for the scholar has here no other sources than the plain

<sup>1</sup> An “*esprit faux*” of Berlin, though a very distinguished one,—so recalling the Averroists of Paris, who alleged that what was true in Theology was false in Philosophy,—has said that “the Philosophy of History is the explanation of History as being no more than the self-development of one ever-immanent but blind soul, or, ‘*welt-geist*,’ never other than one with the world which it makes, till it arrives by stages, in man, at the condition of consciousness, or of spirit”—profanely said, by those who should have known better, to be ‘God’ immanent or confined ‘in history.’ Since Schleiermacher, however, the savant has detected the sole point of departure of the great whole, and of his own bright intelligence, in a pinch of three gases, the ultimate molecule of the primordial nebula, which last, however, is not accounted for by ‘science.’ Those ‘intransigents’ of science who set out from the enormous postulate or datum of Life commend rather their good sense than their consistency. The life germ, or even the atom (if such be), they have to beg of the metaphysician or supersensualist. From the mere molecule to the germ, or even to the metaphysical atom, there is a leap, as from any dimension of space whatever to the order of the relatively infinite.

Some acquaintance with the literature of modern or absolute evolutionism—for there is a harmless or even useful sense of the word in earlier speculation—has shown that the simple hearer should not let himself be overawed by the minatory or predominant use of a plausible expression, especially in matters moral or divine. *Principiis obsta.* If it be well in any case to verify references, it is certainly wise in the present to weigh words, to exact, on the threshold, definitions of such governing terms as “Law,” “Nature,” “Science,” “Faith,” “Cause,” “Evolution,” and not let pass without notice leading terms that not seldom bewilder the partially trained mind of the physicist not at home in the conduct of thought—explaining matter by matter. Here at least the maxim obtains—

“Νῆφε καὶ μέμνησ’ ἀπιστεῖν, ἄρθρα ταῦτα τῶν φρένων.”

man—as well as to the institutions which were the monument of the great occurrences, crowned, as were these institutions, by some centuries of a prophetic economy. All these, however, are noticed here so far only as they were contributions indispensable for the manifestation in time of that great and permanent miracle of regular Christendom: that is to say—for such is the problem at bottom—to the intervention in the centre of human history, in the centre of the then world, in the utmost need, it is said, of a dissolving society, of the Creator Himself in order to the execution of a long-reserved design.

In accordance with this view, the reader is reminded of the manner in which the ubiquitous race of Israel, and thus indirectly the Roman world at large, were first *prepared* to expect, and at the proper moment to give attention to, the great intervention, the solemn explosion, if the word may pass, of the Divine in the series of temporal affairs. It is further to be observed—and this is a special point—how great, or rather how indispensable, was the service rendered in the order of proof proper by the Books of the Old Testament. It was the one logical means, as has been said, provided to authenticate the Gospel Kingdom. Not only, that is, to *prepare* men's minds for its reception, but to demonstrate its supernatural claim, or the finger of the Almighty, when it should be set up.

For it would seem that nothing less than the corroboration of testimony so irrecusable as completed prophecy was needed in those early but critical years to confirm the statements of the apostles as to the Person of their Master, and the import of His mission, to explain their own conduct, to make clear to the hesitant the finger of God in the bewildering movement. More especially was it needed during what may be called the difficult and embryonic stages of discussion and transition, in order to obtain an organic basis of recruits from Hebrew homes. For the executive foundation of the work was by no means, as is popularly conceived, to be enlisted chiefly from the



number of so-called publicans, or of evil livers happily withdrawn from heathenism, and possibly passing in zeal the just; but the subjects of it had been mostly trained from relatively unpolluted years, in the steady faith and excellent moral discipline of the ancient synagogue, so much of which was carried over, with other jewels of Egypt, into the Christian body. Some such solid stock, then, was needed before the great work could, so to speak, get out of port or be fairly launched upon the vast sea of the nations, and so become what it so plainly now is, its own proper demonstration, as the obvious accomplishment of the great Founder's words.

It may well be that truths no more foreign to the general mind than that of the survival of the soul,—a persuasion acceptable already to the wise as the foundation of natural religion, and at all times indigenous with the people (Paley's main point),—might have been made good on the simple attestation of Jesus, and by His own reappearance on earth; but then, this was by no means the *whole* of the problem. For it is asked by what method could the apostles have brought home to the synagogue the duty of embracing facts, or theorems implicated in facts, so plainly incalculable as those which form the creed of Christians—especially when the acceptance of such involved the moral wrench of breaking with the sanction of revered traditions, in order to enter what, while yet the Temple stood, might prove but a precarious adventure, whose promises were yet in the air—how was *this* to be brought home to the conviction of a Gamaliel, or, apart from some great stroke of Providence, to a Saul?

The relevancy of such discussion will have been already seen, for, if the motives that convinced the first adherents to the faith were legitimate ones, in that case whatever has since been set upon the same basis must share the original security. For what is once true, is true *for all time*, and would have equal claims on conviction should a similar juncture recur.

Dean Lyall was, we believe, led into this particular inquiry, from conversation with a Jewish gentleman of much attainment with whom he had been put into communication. He alleged, as was usual, the miraculous life of Jesus, but the topic had less weight with his interlocutor, who did not deny that such powers had at all times been exhibited by prophets and just men; whereas no one of these, said he, nor any one for them, had on such account claimed to bring in a new religion, or introduce a new god, or to be the Shiloh, or still less affect a Divine worship or character, a case, indeed, for which Moses had (Deut. xiii.) specially provided by making it a capital crime. What was there in the record of Jesus that secured for Him this transcendent character?

It was, then, an arrest, so to speak, of such sort that led the writer to inquire into the motives upon which the eventful step of conversion might have been proposed, not to moderns, but to the first lot that came in from the synagogue of those who had lived in all the ordinances of the Divine law blameless. How was it certified to the myriads who coalesced at Jerusalem under James, the brother of the Lord, into the first solid plant or organized body—the normal school, so to say, of the Gospel—that it was the will of the invisible God that they should take the, to many, so momentous step of the Baptismal profession? The answer to this he discerned in a quarter from which in those days not so much was expected—for men were then fain to contend for a minimum—the writings of the ancient prophets. It was a sort of rehabilitation—if the use of a current term be allowable—of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in the eye of the Christian apologist.

The Old Testament, first openly impugned by Spinoza, had, since the days of Bolingbroke's posthumous impeachments, and the very ignoble "*Bible de Voltaire*," been the principal arsenal for levity; and Paley himself protests against the necessity—and indeed there is none—of making the New Testament answer with its life for the credit of

the Old. For this last is shown to be *in tuto* without any such sacrifice, and the Gospel or the New Testament, as we speak, has also now an independent basis of its own.

It was just such basis or evidence as this last, however, that was not yet in sight at *that* point of the century when the apostles first proposed to their compatriots a "kingdom from Heaven," or the fifth monarchy (Dan. ii.), as the absolute object of belief and law of life for all future time. Adhesion to the Cause was, at this early stage, in the nature of a venture or speculation rather than a conclusion of reason, however happy the few who might make the eventful surrender under influence of sacred persons. In the affairs of life, men are daily seen to act on a confidence, and reasonably so act, that events will come to pass for which they have no absolute assurance, and so it was, no doubt, with numbers who at this period entered the kingdom. But it seems obvious that, for the Israelite in general, some guarantee other than such must have been provided, in the *interim*, to demonstrate to the reason the then invisible fact of a change of the Divine will, if we may so speak—*mutatio dexteræ Altissimi*.

It was a change no less than that of the Supreme Will, since it was only with the Personal, or self-conscious, or what was then called a Living God, or, with the wise, the Logos, that Israel had to do. For the really wonderful fact, too little taken into account, that every peasant in Palestine already knew himself to be living under the special eye of his Creator, and had his whole life built and settled upon the great axiom, presents to the mind governed by good sense, an effect as marvellous in its kind, as is the wider phenomenon of Catholicism, or complete Christianity itself; for this last must apparently have been set in the air, had it not found in Mosaism another basis than that evolvent condition of the higher thought, or of "Deity" imprisoned "in history," or commensurate with human events—an assumption incompatible with positive belief or worship.



The latest intellectual creation of God, put forth, as we learn, in order to the reparation of an universe already disordered by the misconduct of the hierarchy to which it had been originally committed, having lamentably disappointed, so to speak, the inextinguishable Beneficence, fell, as is recorded in Hebrew annals,<sup>1</sup> from precipice to precipice; a calamitous fact to which all the traditions of the human family also depose. But what we learn from the Mosaic tradition exclusively is that, at last, as with the prodigal in the parable, a turning-point in the Divine vigilance was reached, at which the Creator wrought out once again, and that under conditions within the cognizance of written annals, the manifestation of His glory, the direct or intuitive demonstration of His existence, under such reduced conditions, however, as might at that time be suited for securing the homage of the rude agglomerations of the Semitic race, with whose subservience was to be effected an inconceivable or properly supernatural plan, the eventual reintegration of all that, after long patience, might be recoverable, of the human race to its predestined seat.

Topics these, no doubt, which are but the commonplaces of theology; but they are not without reason recalled in this place, because it is, I think, impossible for any thinker occupying a degree higher than that of the simple critic, to deal with what are called in forensic terms the "Evidences," without acknowledging, or at least confronting, this fact of an immemorial persuasion of such *primordial design*; for

<sup>1</sup> The matter recently rescued in Babylonia from out the great prehistoric reservoir, bears remarkable witness to the originality of the Hebrew tradition of things and scenes super-sensual, and, from their intrinsic nature, not susceptible of historical testimony. At the same time, they evince how the most profound theologumena will run wild into legend, idolatry, social dissolution, when not guarded by means exceptional such as were the election and illumination of the trunk line of Shem in order to keep clear for the incalculable exigencies of the future a primordial tradition, on the point of suffocation by lapse into magic, polytheism, or at length, maybe, mere craft. Temptations these, at first met with regret; then, in despair, condoned; finally adopted or endorsed by parties themselves the victims of a fast degenerating social medium into which they had been born and brought up. For it should not be forgotten that the society also forms its teachers.

this purpose forms the fundamental *hypothesis*, and it is, when accepted, the obvious explanation of every recorded phenomenon that may be found to have entered into its execution, for, *Qui vult finem vult modum*. As for extraordinary facts, neutral in themselves, as are all facts, these startling irregularities are no more created by a Bossuet, than disturbed by those who symbolize with Hegel; they are but what they were, though, abrupt as they are, they do but offer to the evolutionist a difficulty the more. Just so neither the sun nor the moon ask the permission of the astronomer to comport themselves and to secure their effects as they are seen to do.

It was the consciousness of the wide import of these considerations, brought forcibly to the mind of the author by investigations into which he had been drawn, that occasioned what might be called a new departure, on his part, from the path beaten by more modern apologetics.

“Upon attentive examination of the contents of the Old Testament,” says he, “we find the greater portion referrible chiefly or indirectly to a certain *Promise* said to have been made by the Supreme Being to mankind in the person of their original parents, purporting that certain privileges forfeited by them, and withdrawn from their children, should be restored in the person of one of their own descendants, who is described as the ‘Seed of the Woman.’ This promise thus vaguely expressed but embracing the whole posterity of Adam, was from time to time renewed with additional specifications, till it became to be usually understood of the approach of some mysterious Individual through whom the Almighty, having already made the requisite manifestation of His personal supremacy to Israel, proposed to enter into a *new* covenant, to inaugurate a supreme institution for the whole of mankind.”

Such, then, would seem the use and scope of the Old Testament, shaped, as it was, in view of the Jewish mind, however regularly the scheme of evidence had been constructed. So that this volume is not a manual on the

“Evidences,” so much as a discussion of uses served by that local and transient economy, and, by the providential deposit with the same of predictions of near but contingent events, in order to create the hope and effect at the proper point of time, the authentication of that “everlasting” or irrepeatable “justice” or “Law” (Dan. ix.), which was to supersede the great Mosaic parenthesis; for this was also the Idea that, predominating from the beginning in the Divine mind, was at last made plain in the prophet’s momentous words. Accordingly our Author has not sought to persuade the languid reader that the Bible might be made in artistic hands no less instructive or entertaining than the more choice of secular histories. Nor is the end pursued by clothing events, impressive by the very absence of literary solicitude in their presentation, with drapery from a vivid fancy—*qui auget perfectum minuit*<sup>1</sup> but by that more serious exercise of imagination, which uses the experience of life and well-fed reflection to place the reader amid events as they really were—to see things as they are, in their supra-sensual beauty no less than in their poor human nakedness—a scandal for the wise but the consolation of the simple. For what thinkers who justly deem themselves superior in the natural order have often failed to see, has been, that, in view of that provident Idea to which the Institution so miraculously established still but too imperfectly corresponds, these talented men form but a negligible quantity—if any soul can be such in the Divine charity—compared with the countless multitude of intellectual creatures in every condition, in contemplation of whose recall the great Oblation was made.

But it is to be repeated that although the prophetic economy, the most unimpeachable in kind, when completed, of all miracles, closing withal under a profusion of miracles, had been so shaped as to convince, and, what is more with the many, to persuade the Jewish nationality; or at least to gather out of it a remnant of individuals numerous

<sup>1</sup> χρύσεια χαλκείων, ἐκατόμβοι ἐννεαβόων.



enough to coalesce, under Divine order, into an Institution destined to become far greater and wider than that from which they had been detached; yet this economy was in its proper essence, and therefore still *is*, a scheme valid for any human reason, and would, if repeated under similar conditions, yield the same result—its demonstrative force remains essentially the same.

Other signs or preternatural endowment go, as matter of course, in the equipment of any mortal pretending to challenge man on the part of Heaven;<sup>1</sup> although no case of such, so far as I am aware, has been verified in the instance of any individuals who have not wrought in co-operation with the Gospel. It is not enough for an earnest and cultivated person to walk into the street and expose

<sup>1</sup> If the miracles were not for the Jews the *whole* proof of Christ's Divine-human mission, they were its obviously indispensable complement. It could not have been executed without them.

The conception, however, of miracle itself holds a place so important in the ensuing discussion that a word, *in limine*, might not be premature. Dean Lyall's definition in itself nearly coincides with one given long after by M. Renan, who, however, would seem to think it had but to be exhibited to bespeak its own impossibility; and, not unnaturally, from Hegelian premises. "By 'miracle,'" says Renan, "I mean un acte particulier de la Divinité, venant s'insérer dans la série des événements du monde physique ou psychologique, et dérangeant le cours des faits en vue d'un gouvernement particulier" (*Études*, p. 138. 1860).

But our author will be found to differ widely enough in the matter of fact, since he shows that just such was effected in the mission of Jesus.

His own definition, however, would exclude equally from the category of miracle, all mere marvels popularly named miraculous, whether oracles, portents, prodigies, signs, or tricks, and among them the cases discussed by Hume. Nor does he care to defend any extra-scriptural fact in the *evidential* sense, the only view under which he is concerned to consider such at all. A miracle, then, is *here* understood to be a sign or effect of the intervention of God, and that in view of a declared economy or design; and, since mind itself cannot be seen, such purpose can be shown in any juncture only when the event may have been coupled with prophecy or notification given beforehand. This *notification*, then, would qualify any event whatever as miraculous in the scriptural or evidential sense, even though the event itself might not differ in quality from others falling within the more ordinary class. It is the notice that establishes it, with ourselves at least, as provided by Heaven, and constitutes it a miracle proper, or identifies the "finger of God." Much, then, here turns upon the discrimination of fact, however unusual, from miracle or from properly miraculous fact.

his convictions. St. Simon and Comte founded, indeed, each a school; they would fain go farther to found a church, and failed—and few men in their right mind would so think to compass it.

With regard to this uncommon gift of prophecy, as frugally dispensed to certain illuminated subjects, from among myriads, as it would seem, of pretenders, apes or fanatics—for if we credit the prophets the tribe in general were not more to be commended than were the Priesthood, of whom we often hear from those who have a point to make, so little good—it may be repeated that the notion of prophecy is in this discussion limited to that of the annunciation of events *contingent* or incalculable, and committed, at a known date, to paper, or placed in competent hands. Premonitions so rare as these were not, in the case at least of those found in the Psalms, Isaiah, or Daniel, issued to give merely prehistorical information; nor only to show that the Almighty knew the future; nor even to prove that the whole Bible is the Word of God; but to make a way for a series of events unique and *sui generis*, and that in terms recognized from the very first as pointing to the future—terms somewhat Sibylline,<sup>1</sup> indeed, and provocative of unquiet interest in the interim, but to be explained or unsealed only when the *dénouement* should be placed upon the scene.

These topics are used by the Author to show the indispensable service of ancient documents that had seemed to earlier apologists little more than an embarrassment; so that the Old Testament was, so to speak, put in its place in the eyes of the ordinary inquirer.

Let so much be said in vindication, if need be, of the use of the ancient order. But the general reader might ask,

<sup>1</sup> “Les Prophètes” says a French writer, “ont parlé en paraboles et en images, parce que le langage abstrait leur a manqué, et parce que le sentiment prophétique était le sentiment de l’harmonie et des analogies universelles.” A remark so far true, but only so far, as what they witnessed did not, as with Paul (2 Cor. xii. 4), transcend not only the restricted resources of Hebrew idiom, but all sensible analogies whatever.

What, then, in this case, are the evidences, or the grounds, upon which we are now to receive and adhere to the Gospel? This topic will be found discussed under various aspects in the chapters which form the first part of the volume. In the Apostolic age the arguments were, necessarily, as has been said, drawn from the contents of the Old Testament exclusively, but the case is other in the present day. Those more ancient truths, indeed, remain always what they were—since no theory can touch a fact—but the proof of the facts, or of doctrinal positions *implicated* in the facts of the New Testament, are for our generation confined to by no means an evidence (the Old Testament) shaped for the Jews alone, since it arises immediately from the indisputable organization in the world at large of regular Christianity, or from the spectacle of that very system of belief, and rite, and practice, monuments or medals of a new reign, which the apostolic miracles were wrought to introduce and attest.

From which it would follow that were the books of the Old Testament non-extant, nay, were even the Canon of the New Law,—to the irreparable calamity of the pious, and the ruin of theology,—equally lost, the evidence of the present will and purpose of God in Christ, as completed so far, would remain unimpaired. For, as Augustine could say (in words recited on the first leaf) of the disciples assembled on Olivet, “Their eyes were blessed indeed with the sight of the Divine Head, but the Body they were fain to take upon credit; whereas we behold, and indeed ourselves *are*, that very complement.” And to all who rightly appreciate the work of the older prophets, who foretold and prepared the great scene, since the world began, when contemplated together with the pathetic splendour of the brief career of Jesus, and his own predictions to the slender group of their immeasurable futurities—to such this its present and continuous consummation is matter of inexhaustible confidence.

How our predecessors from heathendom were incor-

porated into this body which we do but continue ; by what providential means the original evangelizers multiplied and got a fair hearing, will be found in due measure elucidated in the following discourses. Much, however, is obscure in the detail, and we have to regret, but with a less hopeless lament than that of an eminent North British professor, "the heart-breaking gap of the first century," for we are not left in any serious loss, since who knows not that great and durable institutions take root in darkness, in silence, *occulto sicut arbor ævo* ? For when, from the close of the writings so providentially left us by the evangelists and by St. Paul, after also the result recorded by St. Luke of their labours,—when, that is, some forty years later than their happy decease, the Church, too busy for literature, has rejoined the stream of secular history,—we are then only let into a further scene of the "multifarious wisdom" or Divine industry of the Holy Spirit.

With the utter ruin of Jerusalem, argues our author, with that vast and far-echoing catastrophe, was wound up all properly miraculous evidence, for this was a contrivance calculated exclusively for Israel. The case was then closed for ostensible intervention, on the part of Heaven.<sup>1</sup> The nation, as *such*, had made the "great refusal," while a vast *remnant*, with many affiliations in the empire, became the nucleus of that definitive Israel which had been, from the beginning, the contemplation of the Divine idea. For this had passed, at last, out of the impenitent "Sodom," where "the Lord had been crucified." It was no longer overshadowed by the local temple or the far-reaching ramifications of the Sadducæan hierarchy seated in its courts—it had passed, too, out of the mystical "Egypt," since *nemo tenetur ad impossibile*, and the law, now made impracticable, could no more raise a scruple in the timorous conscience. So, too, was it emancipated once for all from the Synagogue, which was indeed, according to their

<sup>1</sup> Unless one should except that of the "luminous vision" of Constantine, and the defeat of Julian's operations on Mount Moriah.



maxim, to "be buried with honour," but whose present *personnel* ranked, in the covert idiom of a still somewhat clandestine society, with "Egypt," "Sodom," "Babylon," or, as an apostle more charitable than liberal adds, the "Synagogue of Satan." For the new Israel were at last at liberty to deploy their cramped resources, to organize their dispersed affiliations, to call themselves by their rightful name, to fix their *cultus*, as they entered into the wide "possessions of the Gentiles," under the invisible "Joshua" (Acts vii. 45), who had, by his obedience, now obtained "the heathen for his inheritance, and the limits of the habitable earth for his possession."

Then began the order of things which the Dean has preferred to call the providential. It was the witnessing of this, as compared with the words of ancient prophets, which was the chief motive assigned by the great apologists who capitulated after a time, one by one, from Justin to Augustine, for their own adhesion to the gospel, as it was also the one proposed by them to their several hearers or catechumens; and it is this fact, increasing ever since in width and impressiveness, which constitutes, it is often urged, the more obvious evidence or motive for belief in the Divine institution of Christendom at the present day.

One mind, however, in a philosophic age, this great scene did not escape, but faced with perplexing significance. A man of comprehensive and governmental mind—no pedant, yet a widely instructed scholar—trained amid the larger social conditions of English public life, yet, withal, one of the most competent of critics in an unfriendly age—great wit, if you will, but slender soul—Gibbon, too sagacious to be satisfied with the complacent criticism of the Voltairian encyclopædists, perceived the deep significance of this phenomenon of regular Christendom, a fact so great, with all its impurities, at no time more cruelly enumerated. He was an instructed Christian who in his earlier days had taken eternal things enough in earnest to face the irksomeness of a change of communion, and the fact that a Chris-

tian clergy, in a guise then much in discredit with the wits, were chanting the psalms in the temple of Jupiter while he was seated amid the ruins of the Capitol, put him, as he has related, on the path of investigating the debasement into which the imperial city had fallen. Remarkable is the way in which the writer deals with the subject, distributing terms of conventional piety to the simple, all the while that he reassures with cautelous glance the cabal to which he was affiliated; and that especially in the two chapters in which at length a sort of hypothesis is offered of that great revolution, of which the fact whereby he had been abruptly confronted was a small but not insignificant effect.

Our author has in his later pages sufficiently dealt with the several but quite secondary reasons which Gibbon would make to appear the principal causes of the vast revolution accomplished in the order both civil and religious by Constantine, for the *primary* cause of it he does not so much deny as entirely ignore.

His mind was, in any case, capacious enough to at least appreciate a problem which would seem to exceed the measure of more than one academical head, to whose contributions letters are indeed indebted, though literary qualifications scarcely compensate in moral matters the often observable absence of that “grand sens des choses humaines,” deemed so indispensable by Bossuet in such matters—an absence rarely felt by those who want it.

“While the Roman empire,” so begins abruptly the fifteenth chapter, “was being invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, ‘a pure and humble religion’ gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the natives of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human

kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa ; and by the means of new Colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients." The inevitable phenomenon is thus excellently stated by an unfriendly hand. For the writer must, for his own credit, give to history what to history is due ; but what is the philosophy of the portent, how was it to be explained ?

May we be allowed to mention the otherwise unimportant fact, that we remember the sort of surprise which—on following through three centuries the continuous narrative of the decline of the great empire, from the days of its establishment, through an interval of collapse to the splendid reconstruction under Diocletian—but without one word let fall, meanwhile, by which it could have been surmised that any mortal had ever borne a Christian name—we were confronted with the passage above cited ; even to one's self it carried for a moment almost an air of revelation.

No more competent pen than Gibbon's—and I do not forget what I know of critics beyond the sea, or of coarser minds at home—has, since Julian and his group, canvassed or impugned the cause of Christ. But though fain, through weakness, perhaps, or vanity, to keep terms with the continental arbiters of culture and reputation, it was also the ambition of his life to go down to posterity as the great and definitive historian, and therefore (significant fact) he must needs leave the life, and, withal, the very *name* of Jesus—of all historical names the one that counts even *so* the most—an absolute blank.

This is not the place for discussing interesting topics much in vogue, in earlier days, with justly accredited or even venerated authorities, such as the almost exclusive value assigned in matters of practical or credential assent, to the accumulation of probabilities, to moral or ethical reasons, to the authority not only of the purified heart,

but of the inferential *sense*—if such be—in similar matters. They are questions not without moment, especially psychological, but they do not bear save in a secondary manner upon the points at the bottom of the present disquisition. Doubtless a large part, in moral decisions, will always accrue to the personal experiences, reflective powers, implicit reason, ethical nature, or possible illumination of the inquirer.

But our present problem is one more limited, for here we have only the prior and more simple question, what are the motives to be proposed to the fair inquirer *ab extra* for embracing the Gospel? What are the general motives, which, once properly apprehended, are relevant not only to the haughty humanist, the elegant arbiter, but are plain on the threshold, to the first man who comes in good faith, and who does not, as St. Paul says, “deem himself unworthy of eternal life”? It has been, I think I may say, the perpetual consciousness of the Christian community, that the main facts of the Gospel story, together with the inseparable theorems which form the cosmopolitan faith, were always held capable of demonstration in the polemical or forensic order, so that they can be made good, under reasonable conditions, in the school. Thus are they valid for the *bonâ fide* inquirer about that which, far from an invasion or an injury, is an unexampled boon—but less adapted to the hopeless task of satisfying those who use considerable wits in a sort of game of skill against an always indulgent Creator. Experience of life will lead the reasoner to leave alone those who can take care of themselves and have no need of the physician, and direct such topics as he may command to the protection of the pious or the simple—to let them see that the case is not all on one side—to silence, or at least to disable, the merely critical impugner who has drawn his own stake out of the lot. Happy also if, in the recrudescence of systematic negation which we have witnessed since the middle of the century, so modest a mean as reasoned statement may



avail to tranquillize scruples known mainly to minds of a certain generosity, who may have been diverted from the movement to renew a link more swiftly severed than repaired, under the consciousness of the moral interest there might be in forcing, as it would seem, assent apart from perceptions of legitimate motive, such motive, that is, as moral matters admit.<sup>1</sup> Moods will vary, but facts vary not, but are ever what they are, and were.

While, however, as with the main torrent of young men and women, passions, far more than any serious interest, sophistically put in a silent plea for legitimization, such natures must find themselves, of course, deeply committed against the uncompromising charity of the Gospel.

Doubtless the most operative motives and merits of the Gospel system can only, as Augustine urges, be appreciated by one who, determined by reason—but too happy, by whatever guidance—shall have come within, and make trial of the *mores ecclesiæ*. The simplest person, however, who possesses, or who has joined the faith, is, and ought to be, persuaded that, though the things that perhaps most speak to his own sensibility may be the comfort, or the charms, or the various usages, the fraternity, or, to use the happy coinage of a sage, the *contemplamina* obtaining in the society—yet that these motives ought to, and all ultimately do, repose upon a basis regularly verifiable in reason, or in historical fact.

<sup>1</sup> Belief, however, or rather practical adhesion, is not the less *in se* a moral duty—as was said by Paul at Athens—and that all the more because the merely intellectual concept, or assent to any doctrinal proposition, had its importance mainly as an indispensable precondition to the disposal of the will of the creature to the practical act of submission of his life to the “Holy Commandment,” “The Righteousness, or new law from God,” “The Way,” “The Life,” “The Faith,” “The obedience of Faith.” So it was not, in the last resort, so much a conclusion or affirmation, as a venture, an act of *will* or choice drawn out upon the highest moral probability, that was said to “save.” But it is no less true that without such concept preceding, such act or surrender could not have been elicited or have taken place. It is, however, only the logical order that is here in question; the order of grace, as that of inspiration, is, so to speak, a family question, and does not enter into apologetic discussions.

This persuasion is also, as has been said, discoverable in permanent consciousness within the Gospel economy itself. For as we know, the early Christian literature consists in great measure of the tender of what might be termed pieces of contentious evidence, and these pleadings are almost all resolvable into the one or other of the topics produced above, and mainly into that of the fulfilment in visible process of the words of the Lord, and especially of the Hebrew prophets. Indeed, with the Church, which is, as such, the vehicle of the letter, the conservatress of the historical faith, a main concern has ever been to make good, to secure the "scientific frontier," if the word be allowed, of Christendom; and the merits of the able work to which these thoughts are but subordinate must be judged in the main by the measure in which it may have contributed to this seemingly humble effect. The attentive reader, however, should it meet with such, may possibly, as with an abstruser work, approaching revelation from an opposite point, and by a different method—with which this is not put in competition—find, on a second perusal, matter for collateral meditations.

These remarks will have served their purpose, if they have placed the reader at the author's point of view, one not always seized at once. For side-notes, and for others that may appear at the foot of a page, or, in rarer cases, at the close of a chapter, the re-publisher alone is responsible. They were added to preclude, in a work of reasoning rather than of erudition, the chances of over-ready exception to points merely accessory, and by which the reasoning is in no way affected.

G. C. P.

*St. Margaret's,  
Canterbury, 1885.*

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE general argument embodied in the volume here presented to the public was sketched out by me some ten or twelve years ago, and formed the subject of a series of discourses preached in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn for the Warburtonian Lecture. I have not described them in my title-page by this name, because, although they form the subject, they can hardly be considered as the substance of the Lectures then delivered. Many things will be found in this volume which I did not preach, and some things there are which I had formerly written, but have seen reason since either to alter or omit.

By the terms of Bishop Warburton's will, it is stipulated that the Lectures delivered under its foundation shall be printed and published. I have hoped that in giving to the public these commentaries upon the same argument as I had chosen for the Lectures which were preached, I shall be considered as having sufficiently fulfilled the spirit of the testator's will, though I have not complied with the letter of his injunctions.

Of the delay which has taken place in the publication, it is hardly necessary to give any account. Many causes have conspired, and among others, the duties and avocations of a large and laborious parish. But the chief has been the hesitation felt by me in consequence of the apparent novelty, both of the general view which I have taken of the Evidences, and of many particular questions connected with them.<sup>1</sup> New lights are commonly unsafe lights, even in matters of minor importance; but in religion they

<sup>1</sup> The somewhat apologetic tenor might seem almost out of place in present times, but one object in view was a rectification of what was thought the too limited line of the apologists who, since the publication by Grotius of his "*De Veritate Religionis Christianæ*," had found themselves occupied with cavils against the credibility of the Gospels raised within Christendom itself. In a far more serious generation brought up in believing homes there was little unbelief. The excellent works of Paley were, with the authorities, in almost absolute possession, while, on the other hand, an influential but far from irreligious philosophical school, with German antecedents, spoke with some slight scorn of a method which submitted, they said, the case of the Gospel to the procedure of our criminal courts; the *élite* of the younger generation were too ardent in the revived exploration of the treasures of the "household" to conceive that there might ever be need of mere "evidences" again. Hence this treatise did not at that period seem to meet any so sensibly felt want.

For the rest, it will be seen that the writer is very far from impeaching the force of demonstrations which have established the actuality of the facts, however marvellous, attested by the apostles; for any fact, indeed, an intelligent child is not less competent than a savant. But no mere senses, however acute, could attest the presence of a Divine, and so invisible, hand or purpose in the fact; and the Gospel is nothing if not Divine. It



require, for the most part, to be known only that they may be avoided. The reader, however, will, I hope, not be long in finding out that in the present case the novelty is more apparent than real; and that, however I may sometimes seem to neglect more recent authority, yet in leaving the tracks in which the proofs of Christianity have long been made to run, I am only conducting him back into paths far more ancient and accredited than those from which he may have been led for a time to deviate. Nevertheless, if some of the propositions which I shall venture to maintain should appear more hazardous than is consistent with that wise respect which is due to established arguments, I must claim so far to bespeak the candour of the reader, as to express my hope that he will suspend his final judgment until he shall have perused the whole of the volume, and weighed every part of the reasoning.<sup>1</sup> It would be too much

was, then, mainly the independent and incorruptible apparatus of prophecy which in earliest years establish an inference that now goes with the pious as matter of course. This apparently was the Divine design in the Old Testament, but Paley made no use of the prophecies.—Ed.

<sup>1</sup> A request the more reasonable in that the conclusion is only fairly sighted in Part iii., when Dan. ix., not quite fulfilled before A.D. 70, has been discussed. These momentous words hold a definitive place in the exhibition of the contrivance by which the new Economy was installed, on the repeal, with violent abolition, of the Mosaic Institute, for this last was abolished in coincidence with a fact quite independent of it, the promulgation of a new Messianic kingdom, an interminable or “everlasting

to expect that in all cases he should adopt my conclusions; but at least he will, I think, be satisfied that the effect of them, if received, would in no instance remove any part of the foundation on which the Divine authority of our faith is commonly placed. My design has been to strengthen and enlarge them.

W. R. L.

*Hadleigh, Suffolk, 1840.*

P.S.—It may be proper to state that some passages of minor importance have been introduced into the present edition, and some have been omitted, but no changes have been made affecting the general reasoning. To the former edition two Dissertations were appended; the first, “On the Causes of the Propagation of Christianity among the Heathen,” and the second, “On the Credibility of the Facts related in the New Testament.” These are now inserted in the body of the work; other changes are for the most part verbal, with the exception of the introductory chapter, which is new.

*Deanery, Canterbury,  
August, 1854.*

justice,” or regime never more to be repealed—two events, incalculable in themselves, yet deposited centuries before in the same prophetic clause. Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή.

Men recognized in these impressive facts the intervention of the Supreme God: τοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντων θεοῦ. Hence apparently the torrent of conversions with which the first century closed.—ED.

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# PART I.

GROUND'S OF BELIEF IN THE PRESENT DAY  
EXAMINED.

other parts of the animal creation, all conspiring in the proof of original intelligence ; the argument being, that the adaptation of the different parts of the human body, even in the frame of an unborn infant, to purposes and functions afterwards to be used and developed, clearly indicates contrivance and design ; and design in every case necessarily implies an intelligent cause.

if good in  
mechanics,

Now if this be admitted, as it must be when speaking of *mechanical* contrivances—in the structure of a gland or of a joint,—no reason can be given why it should not be equally admitted when speaking of the effects of *moral* agency ;—why that which is not disputed when affirmed of God as Creator of the world, should be less true when applied to Him in the capacity of its Supreme Governor.

much  
more in  
moral or in  
providen-  
tial agency

There are many events in history, standing to each other in the relation of cause and effect, almost as plainly as in the instance of physical phenomena ; and if this relation could be proved to display foresight and intention, and the proofs of a prospective scheme, the belief of an intelligent cause would be as irresistible in the one case as in the other.

it implies  
intelligence

In either case, if the question refers to the laws of nature, or of the Divine will in the government of the world, it involves the supposition not only of intelligence, but of infinite intelligence. Whatever be the subject-matter in discussion, whether it relate to physical or historical facts, the works of man, or the operations of Divine power, the conclusion is the same, and will not be less certain in the supposed case of revealed than in that of natural religion. If, for example, it could be shown that the now so obvious fact of the establishment of Christianity in the world

was the effect of a *scheme prepared* long beforehand, and *designedly* contrived for the declared purpose of preparing mankind for the future belief of a revelation to be afterwards declared, such an hypothesis would stamp the Christian Institution with an antecedent or *à priori* evidence of Divine authority, more direct and irresistible than any inferential proof of inspiration drawn *à posteriori* from the pure morality, or even the perfect character of its Founder; we might perhaps add, than even from the miraculous works of which He was taken to be the author.

If we examine this argument, we shall perceive that in what is commonly named natural theology the discussion relates solely to a question of *final* causes; that is to say, not to any investigation of the facts themselves, but of their end and purpose. For this is the proper province of natural theology, and the point in which it is distinguished from natural *philosophy*; and the same distinction is to be observed in Divine revelation. and final cause.

But with the Old Testament, as with the New, the question as regards *revelation* is not the mere *reality* of the facts which are there recorded—that is a matter to be determined by historical proof—but the proper *explanation* of them. Whether the events related as *facts* in the books of Moses happened at all is one thing; whether they were wrought by God, and if so, for what purpose, belongs to a different inquiry. So also when we are speaking of the facts recorded by the Evangelist. Who Jesus was, and by what authority He performed the great works ascribed to Him, must be determined on data which are not *absolutely* implied in the nature of the marvels out of which these questions arise. At all events, it is In revelation the final cause is alone in question.

certain that the ground on which the belief of mankind in the Divine authority of Christ is now justly placed, is not the same in kind as that on which it rested in the age of the Apostles.

Evidences  
at present  
day are  
question of  
facts only,

If we take up any writing of the present day upon the motives for assenting to the Gospel, it will, I think, be obvious, that the great event of its actual establishment in the belief of a large part of mankind, together with the important influence it has exercised upon the state of the world, is matter not so much adverted to as taken for granted, as based upon a decree of the Almighty. A fact so obtrusive is of course conceded. Supposing, therefore, the question to be no longer, as it once was with the few, the credibility of an immense event as yet in the future, but the authority only on which the present belief of the world is founded, the most ordinary reason can, it is thought, supply the answer. For *now*, the general belief of mankind in those precise truths which Jesus Christ declared that He was sent into the world to proclaim; the disappearance of idolatry from all the more civilized portions of the globe; the beneficial effects which have followed directly out of the belief of these truths,—afford at once a key to the final and true cause of His miraculous works. No one who *now* believes in the reality of the transactions related in the New Testament, and *causally* connects them with the establishment of the Gospel, is found to raise any doubt as to the *Divine* authority of Jesus.

as seen in  
Paley;

Without wasting time, or showing this by an analysis of the arguments used by Paley in his Evidences and by other writers, what I am here saying will at once appear, by merely looking at the conditions of the question.



Assuming the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and even the reality of the marvellous facts there related, still their *Divine* authority does not instantly follow by a direct and absolutely necessary consequence. To evince this for ourselves, the *success* also of Christ's preaching, as I have said, must be tacitly understood. For if we were to assume the contrary, and suppose all effects of His preaching to have perished with the lives of His immediate disciples, the whole aspect of the argument becomes changed. Our present explanation of the motive of his miracles will fall to the ground. Even admitting the Apostles and first disciples of our Lord to have related nothing but what they had witnessed and sincerely believed, yet it would be clear that they must have been mistaken in what they had supposed to be the true end and purpose of His mission. Be the real meaning of the facts in question what it might, few persons would be persuaded to believe that the establishment in the world of a new religious order and that by an Omnipotent will, could have been the proper explanation of them. That which Omnipotence had fore-determined would certainly have come to pass; and it is because what the Apostles affirmed to be the design and purpose of God, though not then discernible, did and *has* come to pass, that we now believe them to have spoken by Divine illumination.<sup>1</sup> For the very selfsame doctrines and precepts which they delivered,

but the fact does not *per se* evince the Divine cause; that shown now by event.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lv. 10, 11, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my Mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

as of Divine revelation, have in fact been planted in the world, and now constitute the belief of mankind.

But what was to be the proof before the events we now see?

But at this place a question arises; and it is one which, so far as I know, has not been suggested. If the very establishment and present existence of Christianity is itself a part of the evidence on which our belief of its Divine authority now stands, and so important a part that if it were removed the chain of proof would fall to pieces, how are we to account for its wide propagation at the outset, when *this* proof was as yet absent? How, so to say, get out of port, before this now so principal piece of proof was even in existence. The truths of the Gospel are not such as could have been guessed by man's natural reason; and the more unlikely they may have seemed in themselves, and the more remote from common apprehension, the greater must have been the difficulty of bringing mankind antecedently to entertain that belief on which its success must subsequently have been founded. For if a large portion of the world had not been persuaded by a sort of *pre-posterous* process of the Divine authority of the Christian revelation, *before* it was a completed fact, it would seem difficult to understand how it could have got established at all.

The Apostles must have had some other ground,

From what has just been said of the evidence of Christianity as viewed in the present day, it seems plain that the Apostles must have been provided with a proof of some sort, different from that on which the reasoning now depends. And this proof, to get a hearing, and to take effect, must have been of a character to affect the imagination of mankind in no ordinary degree. The influence of events, which it might have been impossible even to guess beforehand upon any *à priori* calculation of cause and effect, is

often easily to be explained after the lapse of time. It requires no extraordinary wisdom in a politician to perceive how important are the changes which the discovery of the mariner's compass and of the American continent in the fifteenth century have effected in the condition of the world. In like manner, it did not presuppose any very uncommon sagacity on the part of Gibbon to have discerned that the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks was one main cause of the revival of literature in Europe, and that this last was that which indirectly produced the reformation of religion in the sixteenth century; but to have distinctly foretold these results at the time when Constantinople fell, would have exhibited a degree of penetration that would have seemed very surprising.

Just so was it in the case of Christianity. It is not difficult for *us*, who witness the actual establishment of the Gospel, and observe the effects which have followed from the life and operation of Jesus, to determine both the end for which His miracles were wrought, and the authority withal from which they must have proceeded. But this was a far harder task in the days of the Apostles, when the great design which they assumed, and which we now see in execution, must have appeared to many as no better than a dream. For they had to assign the cause before the effect, and the future intention of God, *before the event*; and, moreover, to bring mankind to adopt their explanation at a time while yet its truth was, humanly speaking, altogether a matter of conjecture. And how improbable must that conjecture have seemed, in the eye of mere human sagacity, at the time when it was first proposed to the belief of mankind!

since *they*  
had to  
assign the  
cause of the  
miracles  
*before* the  
effect,

and the  
purpose as-  
signed was  
no less  
than a *reli-*  
*gion* not  
yet in *exis-*  
*tence*.

At the time when St. Paul stood before King Agrippa, the import and object assigned to the miracles of Jesus by the Apostles must have appeared in the eyes of most men a thing as incredible as did the resurrection of the dead; for any explanation of the facts was seemingly more probable than that the existing worship of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, were thenceforth to be abolished by God's own authority. But that the worship of the humble Jew, who had been put to death before their eyes by the public executioner, was thenceforth to be established in its place, was surely as unlikely a revolution to take place in the minds of men as any which could have been imagined.

At present  
no more is  
required  
than the  
*truth* of the  
miracles,

The line of argument, I must repeat, by which *we* now arrive at this momentous conclusion would appear, I grant, to be plain enough. The whole discussion resolves itself, if we are satisfied with the customary view of the question, into a proof of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. No one in the present day, who believes the history there related, is found to question the authority to which it must be ascribed. This is taken to have been Divine, by necessary consequence, if the history be true. Accordingly, when we consult the writings of Lardner, or Paley, or Michaelis, or any of the more popular works upon the evidences, we find the reasoning solely directed to the proof of the genuineness of the record, and the credibility of the writers with those able men. If the events described really happened, the question whether any lower explanation of their origin may be offered is never so much as raised. Either they were the work of the Supreme Ruler, or the whole was the effect of fraud or delusion. If

Jesus did perform the actions ascribed to Him, the revelation which He made was direct from God ; if not, not.

Now though this way of treating the subject is perhaps somewhat more popular than the rules of a legitimate demonstration may seem to require ; the practical conclusion is fundamentally true—and why ? The then wanting *link*, the reasoning, has now been supplied, since the appeal to futurity of the Apostles is now verified by the result. But I must again repeat what has been already stated, and that is the point of this treatise :—that the whole question of the evidences in those early days must have stood upon quite different ground from that which they have come to occupy. The reason of this has been briefly noticed ; but the fact itself is apparent on the very face of the Gospel narrative.

Upon opening the New Testament, or evangelical narrative, one of the most striking features which it presents, is the absence of all controversy and dispute about the facts themselves which it contains. In no part of it do the writers enter upon any argument to vindicate the *truth* of their statements of fact. These are taken for admitted, as relating to events which were notorious and familiarly known to all parties. Whatever be the immediate subject of their instruction, whether it be the Divine authority of Christ, or his propitiation, or His exaltation in heaven as Head over His Church, or the calling of the Gentiles, or the rejection of the Jews, or, more generally, the truth of the tidings they were commissioned to proclaim,—whatever was the subject of their preaching,—the ground upon which they there rest their proof is the testimony of the “ Law and the Prophets.” And

which, joined with what we now see, is a practically valid evidence.

But miracles were in Apostles' day little appealed to.



with some limitation,<sup>1</sup> the same remark will apply to our Saviour's teaching.

Paley is obliged to show why, if this be the one point,

In fact, although a belief in the miracles is always assumed, and lies at the bottom of the reasoning, yet so little does this part of the argument appear upon the surface, that Paley has written a chapter on purpose to account for its omission. I think he has overstated the case; for though St. Paul but seldom adverts to any particular miracle, yet he often couples the evidence of miracles with that of prophecy, calling them "*the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*;" moreover, his allusion to our Lord's resurrection is of repeated occurrence. Nevertheless it is true, as Paley has said, that in the thirteen letters which have come down to us from the great Apostle, there are only three indubitable references to the miracles which he wrought himself; and to any one of the specific miracles wrought by Christ, when on earth, there are no direct allusions whatever. Paley rightly explains the difficulty, if it be one, on the ground that the truth of the facts, if the history be authentic, must have been notorious. "*The silence of the Apostles*," says he, "*is a proof, in this view of the case, not that the miracles were not believed, but that the truth of them was admitted.*" So that his claim is self-evident.

and such it is *now* that their design is explained by Christendom.

But it is to be remembered, that in the present day the fact which is notorious and beyond all dispute is not the operation of certain miracles, but the establish-

<sup>1</sup> For Jesus doubtless *did*, on several occasions, plead, even for His life and work's sake, for faith—though but implicit—and trust both in His Person, and His guidance; but He did not, while in the flesh—while at so great disadvantage—open to His audience all that was involved in such faith; and this probably as much in their interest as for His own designs.—Ed.

ment of the system Jesus came to announce—the subversion of the Gentile worship, and the abrogation of the Jewish ; for at the time when the Apostles lived these great events had not yet come to pass, and that they nevertheless would come, was then the very point which the recusants denied, and could not be brought to believe. This last was, practically speaking, the precise subject of debate in Apostolic days ; but this then so arduous controversy is in our time entirely set at rest. Those among us who admit the facts, which in Jerusalem were not disputed, have no alternative as the question now presents itself. The predominance of the new Faith over every opposition ; its general reception for so many ages by all conditions of humanity ; the cessation of idolatry in all those parts of the world where its own worship is established, and the beneficial effects which have followed in its train, —all point to one solution, which is at least the only solution deserving of attention that has ever been presented.

This, in the present day, will be found by the thoughtful to be, in the last analysis, the ground on which the belief of mankind in the *Divine* authority of Christianity really rests. The great majority of the world carry their reflections, and rightly carry them no further. Except in the minds of savants and mathematicians, the diurnal motion of the earth upon its axis, and a hundred general truths in the natural history of the earth, rest upon no better or more explicit knowledge. Comparatively speaking, there are few who can be properly said to understand the profound theorems on which the conclusions of physical astronomy are built ; but they know that such and such are the received doctrines of those who

For this effect lies at bottom of our belief, at *this* day, of the authority of revelation.

are competent, and this they justly conceive to be a sufficient authority on which to ground assent: an implicit assent it may be, but not on that account an assent without foundation. The generality of men are not in circumstances to discriminate in matters of historical criticism, any more than in questions of mathematical science. In both cases they must often be content to rest satisfied with the authority of the prudent; and in this point of view the assent of so many good and wise men who, in all ages, have directed their thoughts to the investigation of history, and to the study of divinity, affords as sound a foundation for the belief in the Divine origin of the received revelation, as it would do if the question related to the more abstruse propositions in physics or philosophy.

A popular proof indeed, but these proofs were made for mankind.

The principle of assent I am here adverting to, is no doubt a purely popular principle; but the proofs of revelation, we may remember, were constructed by the Divine beneficence, not for the satisfaction of critical minds alone; and therefore reflecting men will not, I think, be led to underrate their value, because they are adapted to the understanding of all men as men, and so valid, when apprehended, for the few as well as for the many.

And such, also, we shall find, were the motives provided for Israel, before the Church arose.

And what has just been said of the grounds on which acceptance rests at the present time, is still more applicable to what we may suppose to have been those on which it originally recommended itself. Whatever may have been the proof which God saw fit to provide for the recall of mankind in an age when all the world was either Gentile or Jewish, so much as this we may predicate, that it will not, upon inquiry, be found to have been an

abstruse and difficult proof, but a proof calculated to interest the imagination, as well as satisfy the reason, of all classes of people ; a proof not constructed for the service of metaphysicians alone, and still less with a view to obviate any mere subtleties of criticism. Indeed, if upon investigation these motives should turn out to have been *not* of a kind to affect the minds of the common order, but only those of men of large and comprehensive views, such as are vouchsafed to but a favoured few in every age,—this in itself would afford no argument for believing in the *Divine* authority of Christianity, but rather would suggest topics of suspicion and distrust. The question is not whether the method by which the conversion of mankind was originally effected was a learned or popular, a philosophical or unphilosophical proof ; but whether it was one calculated for the end which we must suppose the Creator to have had in view in vouchsafing a revelation which was to elicit the return to Himself of the intellectual creature fallen, by original deflection of will, into mortal condition, and that through so transcendent a medium as the manifestation of Himself in a human personality.

## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE FACTS RELATED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

General argument against miracles—Hume's argument examined—Two things required in proof of a miracle—All *facts* capable of proof by testimony—Proof of *opinions* depends on other evidence.

*Veracity*  
of writers  
of Old and  
New Testaments.

AS the FACTS recorded in the Old and New Testaments form the foundation on which our belief in the *Divine* authority of the Christian religion is built, it may be well, before we proceed to speak more particularly of the contents of these books, to examine the proofs by which the veracity of the writers is supposed to be established. I shall take the subject in an inverse order, and begin with the Christian Scriptures.

*Criterion*  
of miracle.

To find some criterion by which the Divine authority of a miracle may certainly be determined, was a point much debated among reasoners at the beginning of the last and towards the end of the preceding century. Cudworth, and Locke, and Stillingfleet, and S. Clarke, with others, have all largely adverted to this question; and the discrepancy of their several opinions may be taken as an indication of the obscurity in which the subject is involved. Attention was then drawn to the inquiry, from the frequent appeal to Divine interposition in their own interests, made



by the later Jansenists ; but it had extended itself to the more general question at the time when, some twenty years later, Hume published the *Essay*, in which he denies, not indeed the physical possibility of the suspension in any instance of the usual course of nature, but (what amounts nearly to the same thing) the possibility of defining any evidence on which the reality of such a fact would be entitled to belief. For miracles, he tells us, even if they were true, can only be demonstrated on the authority of witnesses. “ *But the fallibility of this evidence every one’s experience will testify ; and the same experience teaches us that the course of nature is every where one and the same.*” It must therefore, he says, in every case be more probable that the witnesses should lie or have been deceived, than that the facts which they attest should really have happened.

How disputable a *conclusion* it is which Hume here arrived at, will, I think, easily be made evident ; but the position which he lays down is an obvious truth. Assuredly the credibility of a miracle, when viewed as the intervention of an *unseen* hand, cannot be established on human testimony *alone* ; not, however, for the reason assigned by him, because human testimony is fallible—that will depend upon the circumstances of the particular case—but because human testimony, be it fallible or infallible, is not the proper proof of that which is not seen by sense. This will be apparent, if we consider for a moment what is the true signification of the word “ miracle ” in Holy Writ.

It is clear from the whole of Hume’s *Essay* that he considers every fact to come within this definition which is supposed to have happened in derogation

With  
Hume im-  
possible.

Miracle  
proper  
defined.

from the customary procedure of nature. Very little reflection, however, will suffice to show us that it is not this which constitutes the miraculous element—the only point here in question—but the supposition always implied of its having been the effect of an *immediate interposition of God*: its happening outside of our experience would constitute it no more than a prodigy. If a stone upon being thrown from the hand were to ascend into the clouds, or a piece of lead thrown upon the water were to swim, either of these would constitute a prodigy, but not necessarily a miracle, according to the sense put upon the word in the Bible, or in the evidential sense. On the other hand, the most ordinary fact may be shown to be miraculous by the supposition of a providential cause.

Fact only  
seen to be  
miraculous  
when its  
cause is  
shown.

For example: the plague of locusts in Egypt, as described in the tenth chapter of Exodus, was a miracle, no doubt. But why? Not because the plague in question transcended our experience of the course of nature; for the fact was not so. The locusts were brought by the east wind which blew for twenty-four hours, and on the rising of a contrary wind they were dispersed. In this case, therefore, the miraculousness did not consist in the *effect*, but in the *invisible cause*; namely, in the fact having been occasioned by interposition of God, for the purpose of punishing the obstinacy of Pharaoh. In this way the recovery of Hezekiah was miraculous; the death of David's child by the wife of Uriah was miraculous; but surely not because recovery from sickness were contrary to our experience of the course of nature.

Two con-  
ditions go  
to miracle,  
—effect,

For it is to be observed that in the proof of a miracle two things are required: in the first place, whatever the *effect* may be, it must be shown to have

really happened, or fallen under sense; and in the next, we have to demonstrate, either by induction or by direct evidence, that the *cause* of the effect was the *Divine interference* for some declared *purpose*. In point of principle, no two propositions can be stated more entirely distinct from each other: the first being evidently a question of fact; the second a question of opinion.

Assume any fact we please, if we assert the cause of it to have been some purpose existing in the Divine mind, we cannot prove this belief of ours by calling witnesses alone. The reason is, not because, as Hume says, human testimony is fallible or infallible, but because, in a matter of opinion and belief, human testimony is not the proper evidence. The fact might have happened as told, but we might as well attempt to prove a proposition in Euclid by calling witnesses to its truth, as hope to prove by such means the truth of its miraculousness.

So long as we confine ourselves to the matter of *fact*, there is no possible event, be it supposed ever so wonderful, which may not be made quite sure on the testimony of certain witnesses. To show this, let us take the case adverted to by Hume of the Indian prince, who, upon being informed by the ambassador of Louis XIV. that in Europe water during the winter became so hard and solid as to bear the weight of those who walked upon it, turned away in disgust as from a person who was endeavouring to impose upon his credulity. It is clear that the prince came to a wrong conclusion; but his reasoning was precisely the same as that by which Hume would reject a miraculous story. The fact was inconsistent with the prince's experience of the qualities of water; while there was

but also  
*purpose.*

*Purpose,*  
as unseen,  
not prov-  
able by  
*witness.*

But any  
*fact*, what-  
ever, is  
capable  
of such  
proof,

nothing contrary to his experience of mankind in the case of an ambassador telling a falsehood.

as in case  
of the  
Indian  
prince.

But let us suppose that at different times the prince had afterwards prosecuted the inquiry ; and had conversed with ten, twenty, or fifty persons from different parts of Europe. If all of them, without any communication with each other, agreed in the same story, in this case the certainty of the fact would amount to demonstration. That fifty witnesses without possible concert should all concur in the same fiction would be clearly impossible. And remark, the credibility of their united testimony would in this case have nothing to do with the moral character of the witnesses. Its truth might be proved from the mere doctrine of chances ; and I doubt whether it would be in the power of numbers to estimate the balance of probability against the supposition of a fact so attested proving an imposture. If, however, we take the case not of a single event, but of a history like that which we read in the Gospels, the supposition of fifty, or twelve, or even of two quite independent witnesses meaning to deceive, and without any communication with each other, hitting upon one and the same *series* of lies, is a logical absurdity. But if the question be not what they all *saw*, but what they all *believed*, here we enter upon a province of argument where the points at issue are matters of *opinion*, and must be determined not on the oath or affirmation of witnesses, but on the reasons they are able to assign in support of their persuasion.

But the  
singular  
fact does  
not carry  
its *expla-  
nation*  
with it.

And this brings me to the opposite mistake into which writers on the side of revelation are sometimes led from not attending to this seemingly plain distinction. Because, under certain stated circumstances, it

would be impossible to question the veracity of the witnesses to the *reality* of some alleged fact, it is too hastily taken for granted that their *explanations* of its cause must likewise be admitted.

For example, Paley, after combating the truth of Hume's theorem as just now quoted, on abstract grounds of argument, concludes his refutation of it as follows:—"But the short consideration which, Paley's instance, from probability of witness, not in point here. independently of every other, convinces me that there is no solid foundation for Mr. Hume's reasoning, is the following. When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a simple case; and if it produce a false result, he is sure that there must be some mistake in the demonstration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's theorem. If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me a prodigy wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should have been deceived: if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of the account, should call these men before him, and offer them a short proposal either to confess the imposture or submit to be tied to a gibbet; if they should refuse, with one voice, to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed: if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account: still, if Mr. Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say," Paley concludes, "that there exists not a sceptic in the world who



would not believe them, or who would defend such incredulity."

For suffering does not prove sound judgment.

If in this passage Paley had been confining his observations to the proof of the probity and sincerity of the witnesses, and without reference to the supposal of any unseen *cause* of the facts which they unanimously attested, every one would, I think, go along with him in what he says. But if we are to understand that the character of the witnesses, as here tested, would be a warrant, not only for the truth of *facts* which they should have seen, but of any *opinions* likewise, for the sake of which they exposed themselves to so many sufferings, the premises, as above stated, appear to me insufficient for his conclusion. Endurance of persecution on the part of witnesses affords no test of the soundness of their mental judgment; though assuredly, in the face of such irrefragable proofs of sincerity and disinterestedness as above described, no reasonable person would doubt their veracity.

For Paul alleged not only the resurrection but the *design* of it, which was *still* to be proved.

But Paley in the above passage had of course the case of the Gospel in his view, but does not advert to a most material circumstance. For in this case the witnesses did not simply bear testimony to certain wonderful *facts*, but they coupled with this the allegation of an unseen Agent, and, further, specified the very *cause* of his interposition. "The times of man's ignorance," St. Paul tells the Athenians, "God had in past times been forced to ignore; but now commandeth He all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

Now this testimony of the Apostle was not so much to the reality of a simple matter of fact, the reappearance of the slain Messiah, but to God's intention—matter than of inference and belief. Whether in this last he was right or wrong was not to be decided by an appeal to the sufferings which Jesus had endured in furtherance of the Gospel, but by some reason and argument drawn from quite another kind or order of proof.

We shall, I think, see this in clearer light, if we transport *ourselves* into the situation of the people of Rome or Jerusalem at the time when the Gospel was first made known among them. If twelve men were to appear at this time in our *own* country “seriously and circumstantially relating,” as Paley says, “a miracle wrought before their eyes,” and, on the authority of what they had witnessed, peremptorily summoned us to abjure our present worship and to substitute a system both of belief and practice founded on conceptions altogether foreign, both of this world and the next,—is it to be supposed that all conditions of men, Jews as well as Gentiles, would at once embrace the startling proposal, placed thus suddenly before them, unless compelled by other considerations besides those adverted to by Paley? Confidence in the probity and good sense of the witnesses, and full assurance in the reality of the facts, would, no doubt, be a preliminary condition to be settled before the question could even be entertained. But the question itself, in the case I have supposed, would not merely be whether the sign had been wrought, but whether it was wrought by the Lord's own authority, and that in proof of a certain assigned *revelation*. This would plainly *not* be a matter to be determined by the good

For were twelve such men in this country to relate a miracle, and summon us to change our faith and life, they would probably fail.

character of the witnesses, but by the other proofs and arguments with which they had been *fore-armed*.

In those days the appeal was to the prophets ; in our days it is to the establishment of what the miracles were wrought to attest.

In the days of our Saviour, these demonstrations were all drawn from the contents of the Old Testament, though they are equally valid now. In the present day, however, they are supplied, not only by evidence of the Hebrew prophecies, but also by the open establishment in the world of that system of belief of whose near approach it was alleged by the apostles themselves that their miracles had been wrought to attest. Setting, however, *these* points aside, and taking the question as it is argued both by Hume<sup>1</sup> and Paley in the *abstract*, I am inclined to think that Hume was right in his position, though not in his reasons, when he said that the truth of a miracle (if we consider miracle to signify not only the reality of a *fact*, but withal the explanation of its cause and purpose) is *not* capable of proof by word of witnesses alone.

<sup>1</sup> The philosophic fortune of this able writer is due, as is known, to two positions, if a professed sceptic can posit any what ;

1. There is no legitimate ground to attribute to any phenomenon the notion *cause*, as distinguished from mere sense of sequence.

2. No event falling outside the observable routine can be proved, because the mendacity or delusion of the reporter is in every case the better alternative.

Of these theorems, the first is incompatible with Deism, the second with Christianity, if that which has been in operation for so many centuries can be subverted by a theorem.

These sophistical theses fell with less effect upon the more solid and fine culture obtaining in general society at home ; but on the continent, where serious culture, when existent, was mostly professional and so unpractical, they found favour far wider than they deserved.—Ed.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE FACTS RELATED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS (*continued*).

Facts, definition of, considered—Authenticity of a narrative, wherein it consists—Case of Gospel narrative—Miracles, when antecedently probable—Illustration of preceding remarks.

HAVING established the importance of this distinction, the question which I am now about to examine may be stated in very few words; for it only is—Did those extraordinary events related in the New Testament *really happen*? The question which I propose is, not whether they were miraculous in the theological sense; not *how* they happened, or *for what end*; neither is it whether the opinion formed of them by mankind was true or untrue, correct or otherwise; but whether the *facts* to which the assent of mankind was given, were actual transactions. Did the notoriously lame walk, or the blind receive their sight?

Now, before we come to the evidence on which the determination of this question will depend, the first thing we have to do is to agree about terms; that is to say, to come to an understanding as to the very subject-matter of the inquiry. What is it, then, that we mean, when we say that an event *really happened*? Until we know what it is which constitutes, in general, the *actuality* of a fact as recorded in history, we cannot define the evidence by which the mere reality of the

Did then  
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miracles  
*happen*?

What it is  
to *happen*.

events related in the New Testament is to be proved, nor apply a proper test, for measuring the degree of credit to which the narrative of the sacred historians is entitled.

Facts properly real or unreal ; true and false said of *witness* only.

Truth and falsehood, in strict propriety of language, are terms not to be predicated of events themselves, but only of the witness or witnesses on whose testimony they are received. In philosophical terminology, facts are real or unreal, actual or feigned ; not true or false. True and false have always a reference, expressed or understood by the mind, to some proposition only or opinion. That which is made known to us by our senses alone is not yet true or false, but real or unreal ; and the question as properly put is, not whether what we ourselves saw, or felt, or heard, was *true*, but whether it was actually witnessed by us.

Was fact seen by those present ? Then it really *happened*.

Accordingly, when we seek to ascertain whether a particular event or fact recorded in history really happened, the question is, whether it was seen, or heard, or felt by those who were present ; or existed only in the mistaken persuasion of the historian. If we are speaking of a fact which took place in our own presence, that which is said by us to have happened, is what fell under the observation of our own eyes or ears. We cannot, however, have even this evidence in the case of what others experienced ; and, therefore, supposing the event to have taken place in a distant age, or in a remote country, that which we mean to say when we assert its objective reality is not how it happened, or why it happened, but only that those who were present at the time, and who must have seen it if it did really occur, and have known if it did not, then asserted and believed it to be a fact.

Event is

This is plainly not a philosophical definition which



will apply universally to all kinds and cases of supposed events, because facts may happen in the moon, where perhaps there are no inhabitants, or in places where no witnesses were present, as must be the case every day in the instance of various natural phenomena. But in the instance of historical events, it is, I conceive, strictly correct. It is not merely a definition of the proper evidence, but a description of fact itself. When the matter in debate is no more than what was seen, or felt, or heard, then it is the *persuasion* of those who were present that constitutes the fact which we seek to ascertain. This sensible persuasion is, indeed, the primary element of much the largest portion of all objective belief: we have no other or better proof, unless I am mistaken, even for the reality of an external world. In every case our knowledge of that which we learn from our senses, is exactly measured by the report of our senses: all besides is subjective, or matter of inference; that is to say, belongs not to the region of fact, but only to opinion, right or wrong.

It is true that when people speak of what they saw, especially in the case where the subject of their testimony is any thing that had strongly affected their imagination, it is common to mix up with their relation much which was only matter of inference; that is to say, in telling you what they saw, they tell you at the same time what they thought only, but did not see. But it is easy in such cases to discriminate between the testimony of the witnesses and their opinions, and to believe the one without attaching any importance to the other, or no more importance than the value of their judgment may seem to deserve. For example, in "a memorable story," as Hume calls it, related by Cardinal de Retz, we are told that,

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Inference  
alone no  
testimony;  
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cripple in  
Hume,  
from De  
Retz;

passing through Saragossa, the capital of Arragon, he was shown in the cathedral a man who had served for seven years in the capacity of a door-keeper, and who had been seen for a long time, by all the people of the city, wanting a leg. He had recovered that leg, it was said, by rubbing in holy water upon the stump; and the Cardinal testifies to having seen him walking upon two legs. Now there can be no doubt in this case that what the people of Saragossa and the Cardinal de Retz actually *saw* must have been a fact; both saw a certain man walking freely; but it is evident that the miraculous part of the story depends upon the question whether the second leg of the door-keeper was really a leg of flesh and blood: and *this* the narrative of Retz does not enable us to determine, farther than that, in the opinion of the people of Saragossa, it was a real leg, and produced by the rubbing in of holy oil. The *fact* only of such opinion, not its *truth*, is witnessed by the Cardinal.

and in  
ecclesiastical his-  
tory, etc.

In this, as in many other cases, the credence may have been real, although the judgment of those who witnessed it may have been imposed upon. Other cases there are, from which so lenient a supposition is precluded, and in which people of reflection yield no belief whatever, either questioning the authenticity of the evidence, or the veracity of the witnesses on whose honesty it depends. History, and ecclesiastical history no less, abounds with examples in both kinds, which it is not necessary to dwell upon, because the remarks which I have been making are founded upon principles of general reasoning, and apply to all historical narratives of every kind, whether sacred or profane.

*Authentic*  
history  
means a

When it is said that a history is *authentic*, we do not merely mean no more than that it is *genuine*,—that

is to say, written by the author whose name it bears, —but we mean that it contains a *bonâ fide* account of facts, just as they were believed by those who lived at the time when the facts are supposed to have happened. And it is on this assumption in our mind that the credence given by us to the historian is built, and not simply on an implicit belief in his veracity. No one calls in question the veracity and integrity of Lord Clarendon as a narrator of facts ; but if it could be shown that the things which he has related, though believed by himself, had never been mentioned, or were not believed by those who lived at the time, it would be a vain attempt to try to persuade mankind that they had really happened, merely on the credit due to his moral character.

This it is which especially constitutes the value of all historical accounts written by persons who lived at the time. We appeal to them, not as a testimony of what was believed by the individual authors, or any single witness, but of what was believed by society in general at the period described ; and that which I am now meaning to say is, that if the subject of this belief was some matter of fact falling under the senses of a large number of individuals, then the proper evidence of what we seek to know is what it was that *was* so generally seen and witnessed. The true quality of the facts, or the proper explanation of them, belongs to a different inquiry, and one which, in particular cases, may open a wide door to speculation. But I am here adverting to the witness of men's eyes and ears, and not to the determinations of their judgment. This last is fallible enough ; but whether in any given case this was or was not mistaken, is a question of opinion, and depends, as I conceive, upon

record of  
events be-  
lieved at  
time of  
writer.

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quite other evidence than that which the senses of mankind afford.

So the credibility of New Testament facts ultimately rests on their general *notoriety* when recorded.

The bearing of these remarks upon the books of the New Testament hardly needs to be pointed out. It is a common opinion that the authority of these books depends upon their being the production of persons who were the companions and personal followers of our Lord. No doubt, as regards Jesus' character, His sayings, deportment, the duties which He enjoined, and the example which He exhibited, our knowledge of these and similar particulars must have been originally derived from those who were familiar with His person, and had shared His intercourse. But speaking, not of our Saviour's words and habitual demeanour, but only of such public actions as must have been performed in the face of mankind, and if performed at all, must have been notorious, it is plain that the mere names of the writers, the relation in which they stood to Jesus, their characters, or the proof which they may have given of their probity and good sense, weigh next to nothing. Be their testimony shown to have been ever so free from all imputation of dishonesty or deceit, yet if it was compatible with such an opinion to suppose that the great facts which they have related might have been believed originally by no more than some ten or twelve intimate companions, but disbelieved or never heard of by any others who were living at the time in Jerusalem or Palestine—we may confidently say, that their preaching, whatever its merits, would not have produced any general effect upon the religious opinions of mankind. And, conversely, on a supposition that the books now in our possession were written at the time when the

events are related to have taken place, or while thousands must have been alive, by whom, if they really happened, these events must, in such case, have been widely witnessed,—then, as the success of their teaching is a proof demonstrative that the *facts* affirmed by the Evangelists must have been extensively known and *widely credited* at the time, we are warranted in saying that the history also now in our possession is a genuine and authentic history, and may be relied upon as true.

I am here speaking only of the facts contained in the New Testament, and not of an interpretation, which was put upon them by the writers. But with this limit, the assertion which I have made, and which I again repeat is, that if what the Evangelists have recorded was the belief of those who were present at the transactions, in that case their *reality* will have been demonstrated. The history, then, of those transactions, as handed down to our times, possesses all the proofs which any history does or can be conceived to possess; for whatever be the nature of a fact, whether conformable or not conformable to our experience, the historian as such, can only certify to what was generally believed.

It has been observed by Hume, that “*there is not any necessary connexion between the reality of facts and the report of witnesses.*” Certainly there is not; but there is something very like a necessary connexion between the reality of facts and the *belief* of witnesses. Even were it true that no fact could be proved to be really miraculous, still there is nothing miraculous in the *belief* of any fact, however wonderful. This, at all events, is a matter of fact, which in the case of Christianity will certainly not be denied. How im-

Of the facts, I say, not of the interpretation put on them.

Reality of fact depends not on report only, but on belief of witnesses.



portant the conclusions are which are involved in this admission will perhaps be better understood as we go on.

But facts quite incredible in secular annals, quite credible in Gospels, as based on different hypothesis.

If such details as we meet with in the Gospels were found in profane history, they would hardly obtain belief. It is possible we might give the annalist credit for good faith, but it would require very strong proof indeed to persuade us that the facts related by him had really happened; ignorance and credulity on his part would afford a much more probable solution. But the history of Christianity rests upon an hypothesis which is quite different from that on which every other history rests, and must be tried by a different standard of probability. Cæsar, for example, in his Commentaries, professes to give an account of the subjection of a large province; Thucydides, of a war carried on for thirty years among the rival states of Greece; Xenophon, of the retreat of a large army for some hundred leagues through an enemy's country. Common occurrences these, in which therefore the reader might reasonably be surprised, if instead of details of military achievements, the events described had related to nothing but prodigies and the operations of a supernatural power.

For the hypothesis of the Gospel history is the establishment of a new Religion.

But that which we expect to find on opening the New Testament is not the rise of a new Empire in the world, but the rise of a new Religion, and of one which mankind believe, and always have believed, to be a Divine revelation. It is the origin and explanation of this belief that constitute the subject-matter of the history. Supposing we had nothing in view beyond what we seek in any ordinary historian, in opening the New Testament, the first object of our curiosity would be in this case to learn *what* were the

miracles and what the arguments on which the general belief of Christ's Divine authority was founded. If on opening the volume for the first time, we were to find that it contained nothing but such details as may be seen in ordinary biographies, and if instead of any proffered proofs of a Divine authority, we found no evidence beyond many wise and sublime precepts, the same as we learn in the lives of Socrates or Plato, the reader would be, I think, not a little disappointed.

For it is never to be left out of sight, that the establishment of Christianity in the world is beyond any comparison the most important event, as regards its overwhelming consequences, of any recorded in history. And when we reflect upon its sudden appearance, its rapid propagation, and the incalculable influence which it has exercised upon the moral and mental condition of mankind, and then direct our thoughts to the contents of that revelation which it unfolds, it seems impossible to explain its first reception and present position in the world, without supposing the persuasion in the original generation, at least, of a miraculous origin; so much so, that if no traces of such a persuasion, nor of any facts, except such only as are common in profane histories, had been recorded by the Evangelists, that circumstance, as it seems to me, would not have rendered their account more credible, but quite the reverse. For so they could not have been cognisant of the whole case. I may illustrate this by an example.

The surface of the globe which we now inhabit is covered, as every one is aware, with traces of the action of water. Marine productions are found upon the tops of mountains; and remains of animals, such as are no longer to be met with, but which when alive

And that is now *seen* to be the greatest event in history.

As well deny, in spite of signs on earth's surface, former catas-

trophes as  
not now  
experi-  
enced,

must have dwelt in woods and forests, are found buried in rocks at the depth of many feet below the surface of the earth. Even forests themselves are discovered in like circumstances.

as refuse  
contents of  
New Tes-  
tament on  
such  
grounds.

Suppose now that we were considering the causes of this great phenomenon. Upon the principle of those who disbelieve the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, only because it contains record of facts, such as *we* have never experienced, we should be obliged to explain these physical phenomena on some supposition excluding the operation of all causes except such as we are accustomed to witness. Were we to say that we regarded the effects we see as indicating the occurrence many ages since of some great natural convulsions, some commotions of the elements within the bowels of the earth, which had subverted the whole frame of our material world, on the principle we are now speaking of, we should be stopped with the remark, that the supposition was beside our experience: that the laws of nature were uniform; that history had recorded no authentic instance of any such facts as we were assuming; and that we must explain the phenomenon on the customary relations of cause and effect, for that any other explanation would be subversive of every thing that we know of natural philosophy.

For these  
natural  
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world.

Such a way of arguing would certainly be contrary to received methods of good reasoning. Nevertheless, I am scarcely able to perceive the difference between it and that which would compel us to doubt the authenticity of the four Gospels, or to disbelieve the facts which they contain, simply because they are contrary to our *common* experience. The operations of nature above alluded to, have not left more visible

traces upon the face of the earth, than has the teaching of Christ upon the history of the human race. And it would be as impossible to explain the present or past belief of mankind in the doctrines which He revealed, without supposing a belief on their part in some miraculous proof, real or pretended—as to explain such catastrophes without some supposition involving a deviation from what our own experience tells us of the course of nature. Take away from the New Testament every properly miraculous incident; reduce it to a mere report of our Saviour's sayings; insert nothing but what might have been believed of some sage of superior wisdom—and their history will then become incredible from the absence of those very particulars which now form the only reason why some persons can be found to question its authenticity. Just as incredible would be any theory which should account for the submersion of the globe by the overflowing of the Euphrates, or a series of wet seasons, or by any cause or causes within the compass of our experience to demonstrate or appeal to—

#### NOTE.

A somewhat specious objection raised at times, and notably beyond sea, may have perplexed minds who meet with it for the first time, as to the credit due to insulated events recorded by the Evangelists, as the turning water to wine, the healing of a paralytic in some remote spot. It is coarsely asserted in vernacular writings, unrelieved by the disastrous talent of M. Renan, that these facts are assigned by authors, themselves obscure, to some corner of Palestine, done before few persons long dead and gone, and, as such, impossible to examine. We have not, it is urged, a date or name of any one of these facts but what we may surmise from the document itself; what proof, then, is there of any one of these feats enough to convince an ordinary jury? By such, it must be termed, sophisticated industry, each narrative is first insulated and so placed, as if it stood in no other relation, on its own merits; and thus all the possibilities, philosophical and critical, of doubt, are first raised on each incident

in turn, and are then gathered up and accumulated to the discredit of the whole history.

Now, it is true that we do in general, and even with reason, treat with such severity any single event of a marvellous kind when reported to us, especially if any *practical* consequence seems to result from the recognition. The burthen of proof will always lie upon the side of the extraordinary. There may be, therefore, on the first face, in this artifice, wherewithal to perplex for a moment the ear which has been offended for the first time by its application to the series of facts which mark the career of Jesus.

But, it is scarcely necessary to say, that in this unique case of the great explosion of the supernatural order in Judæa the order of proof is wrongly taken—commencement is made at what should be the end; the logical order reversed. It was not the circulation of any brief memoir among classes who could not read, but the fact notorious to every labouring man in Palestine of the wonderful perambulation, for three years, of Jesus with His scholars, which disposed the first hearers of Peter and John, of Martha and Magdalene and Mary, and of the seventy Elders, together with the subsequent *readers* of the “memoirs,” as Justin calls them, of Matthew and Luke, to give credence, not to the mere miraculousness of the mission of Jesus, for this was not questioned, but to each and all of the interesting and otherwise irrecoverable particulars of the discourses and incidents selected by the Four for more authentic description.

Even now we moderns do not need the assurance of these precious monuments to the mere *fact* of the notoriously superhuman career and design of Jesus. Jew and heathen serve, and do from the beginning depose, to as much as this. At this moment, however, it is but too true that all we would acquire of *authentic detail* of the genuine words, and of each action of Jesus—the whole Divine pattern, in short—has now to be sought in these brief but venerable pages alone; unless we reserve the great amount of doctrinal matter involved in the continuous operation of rites among the votaries termed sacraments, and the public prayers—matters universally obtaining from the very ascension of the Lord.

It is too plainly, however, the reverse of fact to say that *all* the renown of Jesus as a prophet, mighty both in word and deed, or any part of it even, could have come in the *first* instance to His own cotemporaries, or to any cotemporary of the apostles, alone or even chiefly through these invaluable writings.

The contrary is the case. It was the vast notoriety of Jesus as a *Thaumaturge*; the marvels then at least undisputed, whatever else was denied; the news carried by thousands into the cities of Syria and Arabia, and carried back into Palestine; the flux and reflux of the multitudes also that flocked around Him in the three years of His incessant passage through the pro-



vinces;—which occasioned a few specimens, for, says St. John, they were by comparison but few, to be put on record nearly half a century later, and, before they were withdrawn from their toils, by those who had been the permanent pupils of the Lord, or, so to speak, on the gospel staff.

It might be suggested to M. Renan that it would have been a greater moral wonder than even any of those which seem a scandal to his reason, that the few personal adherents of Jesus should have been able to palm upon cotemporaries who had every means, and not a few the inclination, of refuting or discrediting it, the strange tale that events had occurred in their own streets, on their persons, under the colonnades of their temple, which no one beyond the then obscure persons named Matthew or Mark, had seen or even credibly heard of—events which, when owned as true, usually involved much personal sacrifice on the part of those who believed them.

Not so many years ago a group of enthusiastic persons, pretending to visions, strange gifts, and even prophecies within their circle, proclaimed the inauguration of a Catholic and Apostolic Church under the auspices of a most eloquent and otherwise estimable man. Now, had the biographer deposed, for the first time, upon his death, that, in the execution of his office their singular leader had sent to the hospitals for the sick or the maimed and healed them in the public squares; or that, as a sign of the moral revolution now about to be effected by his mission, he had changed the river that ran through the heart of the city into fire or into ice,—would any amount of interesting and edifying instruction or circumstantial portraiture of life and bearing, with which the improbable story might have been inlaid or woven, have rescued the production from swift and not undeserved oblivion?

But if, on the other hand, the biographer had, even in recording such flagrant and almost incredible feats, yet repeated nothing more than such facts as were already notorious to all men then alive; would any of us be inclined to go so far as to question further any minuter records of numerous beneficent deeds of healing and charity which the same prophet should have wrought in some remote provincial city or neighbourhood? Our only desire would be to learn from the written record of some companion what was the personal demeanour, what were those edifying details and circumstances, of benevolent operations which none but companions could have known and preserved.

It, then, is probably for the same good reason that we now read with interest so devout the various characteristic and universally beneficent actions of the Divine Jesus in whatever quarters these may have been placed. But, for the same reason, we may also know that nothing but an enormous previous

notoriety—no mere book—could have floated, so to speak, *such* a record as that which the Evangelists, by Divine providence, have left behind them. In this last fact, probably, then, we have the more regular or formal guarantee of the credibility of their contents, and for this we rest not on the simple assertion of the writers (though it bear every intrinsic evidence of good faith) so much as upon the universal confirmation of the great facts, by foes as well as friends, at the time, together with that of the permanent but ever predicted miracle of Christendom, in which last all these are confusedly implied.

Such, then, since the Lord of Life is again in our days—a thought so abhorrent to Coleridge and pious men of his date—to be brought before His creatures and to be acquitted, if so be, *with the skin of His teeth*—such would seem the proper or *forensic* issue (for of that alone we here treat) to which the credibility of the unusual incidents in the life of the Lord is ultimately to be reduced; though the good faith of the writers be, for the rest, confirmed by every internal note of veracity. And this would be, I think, the best demonstration *ab extra* of which, at this distance of time, the several incidents admit. Nor ought any one in sound logic to require more than the highest evidence which such case admits, since the testimony of present witnesses, still less the witness of our own eyes, is, by the very nature of such case, out of the question.

In this one respect, then, the small group gathered around Jesus in the latest recorded interviews were privileged, as intimated by Augustine in words shown on the title-page, above others who have since gone to rest. They did not need to recur to remote and pale deductions, as here proposed, who had been the continuous witnesses of this simple and sublime personality, and to whom the glorious Head had showed Himself alive once more by many infallible signs. For their complete edification they now needed no more than the mere explicit explanation of the solemn facts or stages of His life—the meaning, import, and sequence of the whole. This also was at last vouchsafed. For, beginning with the Pentateuch, and leading them through the prophets and the Psalms, He pointed out, by the new light cast back on these books from the survey of His completed career, how the notes (so spoke the Jews), intrinsic or circumstantial, already recognized, with sundry others now opened for the first time—even to the more ideal, though never popular, concept—had been accomplished in Himself. They had this advantage over us moderns, that *we* do but believe. What we try in thought to create or vivify again, they saw and adored, *videbant caput*; but the advantage was not all with that generation, for it is ourselves who are real items in the then inconceivable accomplishment.

—ED.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Facts in the New Testament believed at the time—Justin—No adverse history exists—Facts never denied, but only the Christian explanation—Negative proofs from Josephus—Jewish authors — Heathen authors — Adversaries of the Gospel—Popular credulity.

THE existence, then, of an original adhesion of innumerable human minds to a miraculous dispensation of some kind, at the time when the gospel was proclaimed, may, I think, after what has been said, be assumed, for it is in fact, what is commonly meant when we speak of a belief in Christianity. For it was the circumstance of events naturally so improbable as those related in the New Testament, having been known to happen, which constituted, in the *interim*, the evidence on which the belief of the *Divine* authority of the Gospel must have been originally founded, as it still is a main foundation on which it continues to rest.

This is a proposition which does not require any detailed proof; neither is it owing to any doubts on this point, that we now resort for information to the writings of the Evangelists. That which we now seek to learn from them is not whether the early converts *believed* in the Divine authority of Christ, but what was the general *character* of the proofs on which they depended, and what the *particular* and interesting

The Gospel, no believer now doubts, *must* have been a dispensation of miracles.

For *this* we need not resort to Evangelists.

What we seek in these is instructive

and interesting  
particulars ;

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Jesus for  
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first.

For there  
is hardly  
one impor-  
tant event  
not found  
in Justin

*circumstances* of the miracles which He was supposed to have wrought. It is the names of the places in which the several actions ascribed to Him were performed ; who the persons were whom He restored to sight ; whose daughter it was whom He raised from the dead ; to whom He appeared after His resurrection ; in what manner He was put to death ;—of these and similar details we might have been ignorant. Without the Evangelical biographies, our knowledge of the matter believed, however true, would have been only general ; but that people had from the very beginning *believed* Christ to have performed many wonderful works would be quite certain, even if the four Gospels had never come down to our time.

There is, in truth, hardly an important event related in these books to which the martyr Justin, who was born in the second century, does not refer. The miraculous birth of Christ, His curing all manner of diseases, His raising the dead to life, our Lord's own resurrection from the dead, are all distinctly affirmed by him ; and his testimony is the more to be relied upon, that his language is not that of a man bearing witness to things which were disputed, but that of one enforcing certain propositions on the evidence of facts tacitly assumed by him to be so notorious as not to render any thing necessary beyond a general allusion. Now, Justin was a native of Samaria, and must have lived within a few miles of the spot on which Jerusalem had stood, until his conversion from Gentilism. His youth must have been spent among persons who were not only the cotemporaries of the Apostles, but who might, and in many instances probably had, both seen and conversed with them.

and later  
writers.

It would add no real strength to the argument,

were I to enlarge upon this point by making a parade of quotations from the writings of later fathers. Indeed, the authenticity of the Evangelical history has been so often and so fully treated, that I scarcely know a single point which has not been made the subject of learned examination. It would be difficult to name an historical fact or allusion of any kind, whether in the Gospels or in the Acts, which Lardner has not authenticated by a reference to profane writers.

If, indeed, any *other* history of the origin of Christianity was extant, differing materially in particular details from that commonly received, or even if there were any other accredited *hypothesis* for explaining this impetuous adhesion of mankind to the faith without the intervention of any miraculous evidence, then something might seem to be gained by refusing to admit the authenticity of the Gospel narrative. But in the absence of any counter-statement or hypothesis whatever, to reject a cotemporary account, and one which was published not only at the time, but on the spot—except on some direct proof, or at least some colourable suspicion, of a designed misrepresentation—is contrary to every rule of reasoning.

In opposition, indeed, to all the direct evidence we now possess, no real object would be obtained by an endeavour to show that a more probable explanation of the belief of mankind might have been invented. But even this is not attempted; and if any one thinks a more probable explanation possible, let him sit down and try to compose a narrative offering a more likely solution of the conversion and present belief of mankind than that which is presented to us in the writings of the Evangelists. Any one who shall undertake

But since no other history extant, or even hypothesis for the great event, why reject, without proof the cotemporary account of Evangelists?

Though nothing would be gained; for to solve what we see by natural causes, only makes the wonder greater.



this will soon perceive how little is to be gained by considering their account to have been fabricated, even if the positive difficulties in the way of his own supposition should be overlooked. To suppose that polytheism was rooted out of all the more civilized parts of the world, that evil-livers innumerable changed their lives, and that all the blessings which have followed in the train of Christianity are ascribable to an imposture, practised by some half-dozen fishermen and mechanics living in Judæa,—this, state the facts as we please, does not present a phenomenon in accordance with the ordinary experience of mankind.

But it is urged that many only, but not majority, believed.

But here it may, perhaps, be objected that this acquiescence of mankind in the truth of the facts related in the New Testament has been too broadly assumed. It ought only to have been said that it was believed by a large *number* of persons living at the time and in the country where the miracles are stated to have been wrought. The narrative itself, indeed, contains an admission that the larger number of those whom we suppose to have been witnesses in the case, did not join the gospel. Ought not, then, their incredulity to be placed in the opposite balance?

But we see from the New Testament that the *inference* only, not the *facts*, were denied.

If, however, we are guided by the testimony of the New Testament (and we have little else to guide us), the incredulity here spoken of did not properly regard the *facts* themselves, as related by the Evangelists, but only the *inference* which the adversaries deduced from them. The perverse inference, which the adverse parties are described as having drawn, seems fully to bear this construction. If, indeed, we are to suppose that many who were present on the spot had never seen nor heard of even the *facts*, this would require to be explained; but no such inference,

I think, can be drawn from any part of the narrative ; on the contrary, from the beginning to the end, it is plainly assumed that the strange facts themselves were notorious and uncontested.

If, as has been shown, they happened at all, such facts *must* have been generally known and believed at Jerusalem and elsewhere in the age to which they are ascribed. It is not difficult to conceive that a difference of opinion may have prevailed as to whether they were wrought by the Almighty ; and even, supposing them to have been so wrought, as to what was the purpose of them in the Divine mind. But if we suppose doubts to have existed generally among the people of Judæa as to the reality of the transactions themselves, this *would* be a legitimate ground of suspicion, inasmuch as it would greatly shake our confidence in the story of the Evangelists, were we to be assured that the notoriety of the facts had been confined to the immediate followers of Jesus alone.

But, on opening the Evangelical story, one of the most striking features which attracts our attention is the total absence of any controversy about the facts related in it. In no part of it do we find the traces of any doubts about the truth of what is stated ; and if the history be true, and if every thing happened as the writers have related, this would naturally have been the case. Any argument offered to anticipate doubts or objections would be a ground of suspicion ; while the absence of all anxiety on the part of every one of the writers about the credibility of their story, creates a tacit presumption in favour of their veracity, much less open to doubts and questionings among reasoners of the present day, than would have been produced (considering what that story was) by the

For if these happened, these must have been known.

And, in the New Testament, is no trace of dispute on this head ;

most skilfully managed argument. It is only a negative proof, certainly, but a very significant one.

but we  
have posi-  
tive proof  
as well.

But in this matter we are not confined to negative proofs. There is positive evidence to show that with respect to the facts related in the Gospels, *these* were not denied at the time either by the Jews or Gentiles.

Easy now,  
for unin-  
formed  
man, to  
call them  
in ques-  
tion; not  
easy then.

It is easy, especially for one who has never informed himself, at this distance of time, to call in question, whether rightly or wrongly, the authenticity of the Gospel narrative; but supposing that narrative to be true, it would not have been so easy to do so then, while witnesses were alive to attest the facts.

Josephus.  
His testi-  
mony.

And to begin with Josephus, the only cotemporary authority in this part of the evidence. He was born in Judæa about the date of our Saviour's death. His history of the "Wars of the Jews" was written about the year 75. His larger work of the "Antiquities of the Jews" about twenty years later, at a time when we know from Pliny and other sources that the Christians had become an innumerable multitude of people, not only at Rome, where Josephus then dwelt, but in the remote provinces of the empire. In his "Wars of the Jews" Josephus tells us that many persons attributed the destruction of Jerusalem to the vengeance of Heaven against its inhabitants *for the crime of having put to death "James, surnamed the Just, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ."* In his "Antiquities" (Book xviii.) he speaks of John the Baptist, dwelling upon all the same features, both of his life and character, that we read in the Gospel of St. John. Afterwards in the same book, having to relate what happened in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, he makes mention of our Lord Himself in words which have led many persons to doubt their

genuineness, so strong are the expressions from the mouth of a Jew. "*Now there was about this time,*" says Josephus, "*Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was the doer of wonderful works, a teacher of those who embraced the truth with gladness. He drew over many both of the Jews and Gentiles. Who being accused by the chief persons of our nation, when Pilate had adjudged him to be crucified, those who had loved him still continued to do so, for he appeared again alive among them on the third day, as the Divine prophets had foretold.*" These are not the words of one who thought lightly of Jesus, or who disbelieved the facts related of Him by his followers. Yet there is not an expression which denotes that the writer of them was a Christian; nothing which (supposing the facts related in the New Testament really to have happened) might not have been written by Gamaliel. Our Saviour is spoken of as one who seemed more than man, but without any allusion to His Divinity, or to any office or attribute such as is in the mind of a Christian when thinking of Christ. If the words last quoted, however, be no part of the genuine history of Josephus, the interpolation it is to be observed is of early date. We find them quoted as early as the beginning of the fourth century by Eusebius in his "Ecclesiastical History" (Lib. i. ch. 11). The passage from the "Wars of the Jews," in which Josephus, speaking of St. James, describes him as "*the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ,*" is cited by Origen (born A.D. 185) in his "Commentary upon Matthew." These passages, if spurious, are not corruptions of the text, such as all ancient MSS. are liable to, but deliberate interpolations. A particular document may be interpolated,

so may a single codex ; but not the copies of a work which has been many years in the hands of the community at large, and after it has ceased to be in the keeping of individuals. It may seem extraordinary that Josephus, being a Jew, should have so expressed himself, or that so expressing himself he should not have professed belief. But whether the passage be genuine or spurious matters but little in the present argument. I am not saying that Josephus believed that Jesus was *He*, but only that, as far as we know, he did not *deny* the *facts* themselves which are related of Him in the New Testament.

In any case, however, we gain nothing but a choice of difficulties by rejecting this testimony, so far as it goes, to the popular conception of Jesus. To suppose that of all men the inquisitive and philosophic Flavius Josephus was incognizant of either the career of Jesus Himself and His own professions, or had overlooked the far-reaching propaganda of the disciples, undesignedly and by an act of accidental carelessness, is beyond ordinary belief. A far more probable explanation would be, that, aware, as a great public man anchored in the centre of affairs, of the main occurrences, and not caring to deny, on the one hand, what he surmised to be the truth, and in order, on the other, to avoid affronting the national opinion,—he had been content to pass over the whole matter without committing himself to any remark.<sup>1</sup> In either

<sup>1</sup> For the rest, we have the testimony of the founder of historical criticism proper, Joseph Scaliger, to the scrupulous accuracy and superior information of Josephus on the affairs of the Jews, not in matters domestic only, but even in their foreign relations. Ignorance, indeed, on his part is hardly a possible alternative, on account of his long and intimate relations with the Imperial Court, and probably with Flavius Clemens, the great convert himself. See Note A.—Ed.



view of the question, however, whether we receive or reject the passage I have just quoted, we are justified in appealing to his writings as an authority, *pro tanto*, for saying that we are not to assume the facts which the Evangelists have related of Christ to have been *denied* by the majority of the Jews in Palestine, because many who were witnesses of them may not have accepted them as proofs of His Divine authority. It may not be easy to determine with exactness the private opinion of Josephus; but admitting, for mere sake of argument, that his writings *did* contain no allusion to Jesus, the suppression of our Saviour's name would be quite as difficult of explanation as is his alleged testimony; for a person whose name was sufficiently spread abroad to obtain notice in the cotemporary pages of Tacitus and Suetonius at Rome, as the occasion of the war, cannot have been so unimportant a character at Jerusalem as to have escaped the knowledge of Josephus.

The testimony, then, or even the silence, of Josephus may in this sense be classed in the same rank as that of an eye-witness; for though he was not born before the death of Christ, yet he lived at a time when thousands were alive who had been present at the transactions related in the New Testament, and when he himself might have been a witness of some of those which are recorded in the Acts.

But all evidence of this kind ceases with Josephus. The Talmud, indeed, is full of Jewish traditions, many of them apparently of high antiquity, but it was not compiled till many years after the age of the Apostles. It contains frequent allusion to the Nazarenes, as it calls the Christians, but not any, I believe, to Jesus Himself, or to His history. If I am not mistaken, the

His  
silence,  
even.

The Tal-  
mud

earliest writing in which these are distinctly noticed is a tract printed by Wagenseil in 1674, entitled in parody of St. Matthew, "Sepher Toldoth Jeshu" (the Book of the Generation of Jesus). The account as we there first have it is in Latin only, and so it is of late date, probably of the thirteenth century, and is therefore of little value, except as showing that although the Jews in that age when this piece was produced possessed no document pretending to authenticity, yet that the story obtaining in their own circles as to the birth and career of Jesus, was the very same in substance—that is to say, in respect of the leading facts, and in the miraculous character of the facts ascribed to Him—as we find in the New Testament. In this book Jesus is described as having been a magician, who had stolen, that is, obtained by magic arts, from the Holy of Holies the true intelligence of the Shemhamphorash, Tetragrammaton or ineffable name of God in the Four Letters; by pronouncing of which He performed a variety of extraordinary feats, some of which the author relates. They are too monstrous and at the same time puerile to recapitulate; but it is important to observe (and this gives some value to the tract), that precisely the same account of the miracles of Christ, and of the means by which He performed them, was received from the Jews by Celsus more than 1600 years ago. Insane as the tradition may be, it is not without interest, as showing that in the matter of fact, the miraculousness of the powers ascribed to Christ were no part at all of the original or local controversy between His first disciples and the Jews; and, indeed, as far as I know, never have been.

does  
not deny  
miracles,  
but attri-  
butes them  
to theurgy.

So Orobio:  
Jews have

Orobio,<sup>1</sup> indeed, a weighty modern authority, dis-

<sup>1</sup> Limborch, "*Amica Collatio*," pp. 132, 156.

tinently asserts that the more learned Jews never have taken up this ground of argument. He admits that the miraculous actions attributed to Christ are a sufficient evidence to confirm a Christian, but are not such as ought to satisfy a Jew : “ *Meâ saltem sententiâ, satis bonæ sunt et efficaces ut Christiani eas amplectantur, et in suâ fide roborentur, non vero ut Judæi Christiani fiant, ut supra latius probavi.*” And the reason he gives for this distinction is one which does not impugn the reality of the facts which Christians believe, but only the truth of their opinion in concluding that He who wrought them was shown by the fact to have been the Messiah : “ *Non crediderunt Judæi, non quia opera illa quæ in Evangelio narrantur, à Jesu facta esse negabant ; sed quia iis se persuaderi non sunt passi, ut Jesum crederent Messiam.*”

If we turn from the Jews to heathen writers of the first two centuries, there is not only the same absence of any counter-statement in matters of fact, but what amounts to an admission that in respect of miracles, people were not very greatly divided, however wide asunder their opinions may have been on other points. Though numerous apologies for Christianity have come down to us from the pens of its defenders, yet the writings against which these apologies were directed have been either lost, for the most part through neglect, or destroyed by mistaken zeal. In the work of Origen against Celsus, we fortunately possess a tolerably full knowledge of the line of argument which this last, a writer who must have been born in the early part of the second century, took up. “ *It is but a few years,*” said he, “ *since he (Jesus) delivered this doctrine, who is now wor-*

never  
taken that  
ground,

nor even  
Celsus,

*shipped by the Christians as the Son of God."* This was the absurdity with which Celsus charged the Christians, namely, of offering Divine worship to a person who, almost within the memory of individuals then alive, had been put to death by the public executioner. "*Other persons,*" said he, "*besides Christ have performed miracles, as Abarus, the Hyperborean, who was able to overtake an arrow in its flight; and Aristeas, who died twice, and rose again; and Clazomenus, whose soul frequently wandered about the world separate from his body: and yet no one,*" he observes, "*ever thought of worshipping these as gods.*"<sup>1</sup>

In another place Celsus adverts to the resurrection of Christ; but instead of denying the actual fact, he only calls the nature of it in question, contending that the bystanders were mistaken, "*for that it was a shadow and not Christ himself which they saw. Admit,*" says he, "*that Christ really performed all the miracles ascribed to him by his followers, what conclusion can be drawn from this, except that he was conversant in those arts by which for a few pence, quacks and conjurors perform their wonders in every market-place?*"

It is plain from these and many other passages to

<sup>1</sup> Preoccupied, however, with another topic, our author does not, perhaps, lay sufficient stress upon the very unique character, and the splendour of our Lord's and the Apostolic miracles, and the immense present impression they must and ought to have made upon individuals, if they took place at all, as by the hypothesis is assumed. Who can, however, give credit to the *bona fides* of such cavils, if the works of Jesus were really such as related in the Gospels, which was never denied? For the contrast between vain-glorious and useless feats, and the philanthropic miracles of the Gospel, the too much neglected Clementines, ch. xxxii. and xxxiv., may be consulted with advantage.—ED.

be found in Origen that the task which the first Christians had to perform, in this part of the question, was not the same as ours in the present day. The adversaries of Christianity in his time took exactly the contrary line of argument from that which we have to encounter. Instead of maintaining that the facts related by the Evangelists did not really happen; that any deviation from the ordinary course of nature was incredible, and that no amount of human testimony could render such facts worthy of belief; they argued that miracles furnished no evidence of a Divine authority; that they were of common occurrence, and could be performed by thousands, by means of arts which it was a disgrace to practice. Accordingly, they did not meet the question face to face by denying or disproving the evidence on which its authority now rests: the course they took was to set up an opposition. The wonderful actions ascribed to Christ, Celsus asserts to have been no more wonderful than those ascribed to Pythagoras or Apollonius Tyanæus, without, however, a shadow of evidence. This he endeavours to demonstrate at length by comparing miracle with miracle; and then concludes that as mankind had never dreamed of paying Divine honours to these illustrious men, merely on account of the surprising effects which their superior knowledge of natural causes enabled them to accomplish, it was contrary to reason and common sense, on the part of the Christians, to maintain on such grounds the Divine pretensions of one who was not an illustrious philosopher like Pythagoras, but only an obscure Jew.

I need hardly say, that the evidence offered for the belief of these fabulous miracles was not the declarations of eye-witnesses, nor even of writers pretending

nor any  
others of  
that date.

Feats of  
Apollonius

were  
neither  
told by  
eye-  
witnesses,



not derived  
from such.

to have derived their knowledge from eye-witnesses ; but it is not necessary to enlarge upon this point. Even if the evidence to prove the reality of the facts related by Philostratus 200 years later, in his “Life of Apollonius,” was susceptible of a demonstration equal to the proof we have of the authenticity of the New Testament, yet the evidence of a *Divine* authority would totally fail us. Origen, in his answer to Celsus, does not think it necessary to deny the reality of the wonderful feats of Apollonius, but he asks Celsus to state the purpose for which they were performed,—to point out any effects which resulted from them ; contrasting their utter barrenness in this respect with the important fruits which had been produced in the world by the belief of mankind in the miracles of Jesus Christ, even at that early date.

Credulity  
of Pagans  
in second  
century, a  
result of  
notoriety  
of Gospel  
miracles.

And here, before I conclude this chapter, it may not be out of place to observe, that this very credulity of the heathens, as instanced in the above quotations from Origen, may afford a presumptive evidence of the general credit which the miracles related in the New Testament must in that later age have obtained, and that in this way. Before the time of Christ we do not hear much of “magic” itself as an art or science nor of the professors of it as a body of men. But in the second century, as is evidenced from Lucian and Apuleius, it had become a regular trade ; and adventurers seem to have worked upon the imagination of mankind to a degree which, but for the explanation afforded by the early history of Christianity, would not be quite intelligible. Supposing, however, the facts which that history contains to have really happened, such result would seem to be a natural consequence.

<sup>1</sup> Note B.

Every person who admitted the facts which the Christians affirmed, yet denied the conclusions which these drew, must almost of necessity have admitted the existence of theurgic arts. And if the same facts as we read of in the New Testament were again, even in this age of the world, to be transacted before our eyes, it appears to me that the same persuasion would again be created. Those who, like the Jews and heathens, should reject any supposition of a Divine purpose, but yet were of opinion, from the circumstances of the case, that the actors were not mere vulgar impostors, would be compelled to conclude either that super-mundane spirits used the agency of certain individuals, or that certain individuals by means of secret arts were able to command the agency of such spirits, for effecting what could not be accomplished in the regular course of nature.

Viewing the matter from this point, the credulity of mankind in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, instead of affording any reason for doubting the reality of the facts contained in the Gospels, becomes, I think, only an argument to show how general and startling, to those who still held aloof, must this admitted reality of the Apostolic miracles have been. I am far from meaning to suggest that the credulity of mankind was any serious part of the evidence, but only that the proneness to believe in superstitious arts said to mark the earlier centuries would be another consequence flowing naturally from such admission, and in this view throws no suspicion at all upon the narrative of the Apostles, but would rather confirm it.<sup>1</sup>

So viewed, then, it is rather a confirmation of them.

<sup>1</sup> For this would not go to show that the propensity to practise theurgy, and to multiply apparent prodigies among the heathen,

—especially in the Platonic school, in the second century—was any proof that the miracles of Jesus had been lightly believed in His time, but rather that this was but an emulous or mimetic effort of rival savants,—an echo only or effect of the splendid reality of the Gospel phenomena. The controversy between Simon Magus and Peter, as given in the Clementines, which come within the first half of this century, might be consulted. The Rabbis have the saying that “Satan is the ape of God.”

#### NOTE A.

JOSEPHUS. *Page 46.*

It cannot well be said that, in the way of criticism proper—for intuitive history is not criticism—the advantage is always with moderns. For the first century the materials exist in two books alone, now in everybody's hands—the New Testament and Josephus. Writers, however, who will put up with any story rather than the received one, and yet have mostly been official teachers of Exegesis, Church History, or Theology, find themselves under the necessity of running up some sort of edifice by the side of that which is in immemorial possession, with little material but what is supplied from subjective impressions. So they lop the branch on which they are seated, and indeed extinguish any serious interest in the subject they treat.

For such productions, however evincing general acquirements, literary dexterity, finesse, or even really interesting *aperçus*, or side-views, are not much more than what are called in some quarters works of *tendency*, fruit of certain preoccupations independent of the depositions of the only sources now available. “Vous croyez cherchez la vérité,” says one, “et vous cherchez le doute.”

From no other source can have arisen the recent impulse to destroy the Evangelists, especially St. Paul, and, withal, Josephus; for, as M. de Maistre does not scruple to insist, in controversy you have done nothing until you have destroyed the persons. With regard, however, to Josephus, in his *prolegomena* to his vast work, Joseph Scaliger deposes that even in the *foreign* relations of the Jews, he had found Josephus more to be relied upon than the Greek or Latin historians, so signal was his good faith, and so great the compass of his information. Such an authority is not to be set aside by airy critics, because they may have detected in him some movements of complacency, or because he may have paid tribute to literary mannerisms of an age quite other than ours, which has, however, its own.

Though there is no reason for pronouncing Josephus as in any way affiliated to the Church, there are not unfair grounds for surmising that he may have made one of the very many who

held *that* Joshua, who was called the Christ, to have been the Messiah, if such were to be at all. Before Jerusalem fell, few probably could have escaped such thoughts; but observing as yet none of the great phenomena connected in the popular mind with the Advent, they hesitated to commit themselves to all that was then involved in the open baptismal profession.

But the Apostles saw that a formidable hour was fast approaching. This was the point of Peter's circular. Those only were saved from the Deluge who went *into* it with Noah. Those who seem to risk their safety are those who will alone secure it. We are now closing the ranks. Private persuasion will not longer stand; the Red Sea must be entered by every one who would not perish among the Egyptians. Baptism, in short, must be faced with all its trying consequences. In such case, apparently, were multitudes for whom Paul drew up the circular treatise after his last solemn inspection, during his four years of forced leisure at Cæsarea or at Rome. It was now or never that those whose first catechetical faith and so very imperfect renewal had so long been tolerated by the profound Apostle, should take one step more, and realize the adult diet of the initiated—the proper Divinity of Messiah—without which could be no true apprehension of his atonement or of the Eucharist. St. John, too, had warned such still infantine adherents, that it was the “last hour,” and bade them “come out and be separate” from the devoted community with whose complicity the “Lord had been crucified.”

With regard to the passages relating to John the Baptist and James, there would seem little more reason for rejecting their authenticity than that of the sacred books to which Josephus may be said to hold a sort of deuterocanonical position. The only place open to surmise of gloss or interpolation would be the categorical words, *αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ χριστός*; and with regard even to these, it would be not unlikely in the interest of this infatuated and incalculable nation itself, that Josephus should think to allay the cruel vigilance of the dynasty among whom he was himself domesticated, by inducing the persuasion that all cause of alarm and so of severer measures was over, for not only had the possible seat of the King of the Jews been abolished, but the king himself had come and been despatched by the hand of a Roman official. Josephus was himself, with all the better heads of the day, quite out of sympathy with this insane revolt; he had, however, done his duty as a Jewish noble placed in high command, and, having so acquitted himself, like Jeremiah of old, he recognized the hand of a retributive Providence in the total destruction of the city, and of its horrible populace.

## NOTE B.

MAGIC. Pages 52, 53.

Of no one, that is, who had made the profession of magical operations subservient to a personal or a philosophical propaganda. For, of so-called magic itself, it might be hard to say in what age of the world it is not met with. By magic, however, in the more ancient and general sense, was meant the possibility of entering by methods more or less occult into relation with superhuman powers, whether working with or counter to the plans of Providence. This last sort, said also to be the deeper, was ever in disrepute, as sorcery, or necromancy; but the former sort was not deemed incompatible with piety, though for obvious reasons an object of misgiving, and was called Theurgy. It was mainly this that was professed, in later times, by pretenders, such as Apollonius, Alexander, or Peregrinus, so far as the last was a person; while the darker art was pursued by Simon, the typical sorcerer and heresiarch, Elymas, and others who wrought especially in contravention of the apostolic missions. It is certain, however, that the frequent failures in either kinds were usually eked out with imposture, but whether the agents were in all cases mere charlatans, or had real access to invisible powers or forces, will always be a difficulty with those who may have thought such subject worth attention.

In any case it is hard to admit the good faith of those ancient authors who, never venturing to deny the notoriety of the wonderful works of the "Magus, who was crucified at Jerusalem," and "unable to rescue himself," affected, with the levity of the erratic adventurer of Samosata,—one cannot forget the misapplication of very signal cotemporary talents,—to place the operation of various ostentatious and equivocal personages upon the same level.

Whereas those of Jesus were obviously different in *kind*, as proceeding from a far superior and transcendent source and will, whether human or Divine.

The contrast will be found well brought out in the far too neglected Clementine literature, especially in the piece called the *κῆρυγμα*, or "Preaching of Peter," which is allowed to fall within the first half of the century that produced the epicureans Celsus and Lucian, from the latter of whom so much local information is obtained. So much do the erudition and dialectic proficiency shown in these anonymous pieces recall the "Stromata" which cites more than once the *κῆρυγμα* as a doctrinal authority on the identity of Jesus with the Logos, that they might seem to have emanated from the learned catechetical school itself.

It indeed cannot now be known which of the two redactions was the first in the field, or whether these are varieties of a



single non-extant original; the basis both of plot and matter is certainly the same, the details of Peter's method and demeanour vivid and instructive in a high degree. The gnosis, though more free than what obtained after the Nicene contentions—for language had then been sifted—always knows the limits of regular Christianity; but all speculative arguments are *explicitly* given by Peter for no more than their worth, and he is represented as offering to the populace, or to the captious outsider, as much as without injury to themselves they could receive, reserving arcana for the disciples.

Clement is represented as a young and earnest inquirer just brought under the instructions of Peter, who had been himself deputed by James, the brother of the Lord, to Caesarea—no missionary himself, but the sedentary head, or pivot of the normal organization—to undo the mischief there contriving by Simon, the typical and malignant obstructor of the apostolic missions. James, as Peter relates, had not long before been left for dead in the temple by a tumult got up by one called here “the enemy” (the still unconverted Saul), now thought to be doing the same mischief at Damascus. It was James, then, himself who had despatched Peter on his first foreign or heathen mission, and this interesting *mise en scène* at Caesarea represents the first stage of the travels of Peter, through the great Gentile cities of the coast, by Antioch, to plant a Gentile centre at Rome, where the great traditional conflict took place.

But these works are referred to here only for illustration of the discrepancy between the apostolical miracles and the legendary matters offered even at this day as a legitimate effect by even very lettered men, to a public too careless to inform itself from sources now equally open to all.

Thus (Recog. iii. 47) Simon retorts on Peter, ‘You have just played a mere ruse on me, but I will show you the power of my Divinity, so that you shall quickly be brought to fall down and worship me. I am the First Power, who am always and without beginning, though having entered the womb of Rachel, I was born a man that I might be visible to men. I have flown through the air; I have been mingled with fire, and have made one body with it; I have made statues walk; I have animated lifeless things; I have made stones bread; I have blown from mountain to mountain; I have moved from place to place, upheld by angel hands, and have lighted upon the earth. Not only have I done these things, but even *now* I am able to do them, that by facts I may prove to all that I am the Son of God, enduring to eternity, and am able to make those also who believe in me endure in the same manner for ever. But vain are all your words, nor can you perform any real works, since he who sent you is a magus who yet could not deliver himself from the suffering of the Cross.’

But what says Peter in explanation to disciples somewhat perplexed by such vast assertions (iii. 60)? ‘What, I pray, is the use of showing brazen statues walking, or dogs barking, etc., all which you say that Simon did or professes to do? Whereas all signs from the GOOD ONE are directed to the advantage of men, as were also those done by the Lord, who gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, drove away sickness, drove out demons, and such other things as *you see me also do*. Those signs, therefore, which make only for the benefit of man, and confer blessing, the wicked one cannot perform, until, at least, the end of the world, for then only will he be permitted to mingle his own signs with some good ones, such as the expulsion of demons; for so, going beyond his limit, and being divided against himself, he will be destroyed, though by such confusion he may unsettle those even who seem to be expert in discerning spirits and discovering miracles.’

Again (v. c. 10), ‘He therefore is the True Prophet who appeared, as you had heard, in Judæa, and who, standing in the public places, by no more than a simple word caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, cast out demons, and even gave life to the dead, and, since nothing was impossible to him, even read the thoughts of men, a thing possible for God alone.

‘He it was who proclaimed the kingdom, and we received him as the True Prophet, not for his words alone, but from his works as well, but still more,’ adds Peter, ‘*because the sayings of the Law, which many generations before had set forth his coming, were fulfilled in Him.*’ See Clark’s Edinburgh Series.

For the rest, the earlier fathers, or literature of the three first centuries, are now accessible in a few volumes, each of low price, for the few who have a serious desire to inform themselves, but may possess no language but their own, in which also they have the Bible and Josephus. Nice points will remain for the critic, but the main state of the case is open to any unsophisticated mind. Indeed, in matter moral or divine, much acumen is rather at a disadvantage. Quick-minded men look for noon at fourteen o’clock, as they say.—ED.

## CHAPTER V.

### GENUINENESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PROVED BY EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

Variety and extent of these proofs—Jealousy of the criticism to which they have been subjected—Saying of Dr. Johnson examined—A miraculous narrative, when antecedently probable.

THAT the books of the New Testament were written by persons who were cotemporary with the events which they have related, would be a proposition admitting of no controversy in the case of any ordinary history.<sup>1</sup> In proof of the genuineness of these books little can be added to the arguments of Lardner. Something may, perhaps, be said in further confirmation of the authenticity of the narrative matter itself, but nothing can or need be added to prove its genuineness, or that the authors of it were such persons as those to whom it has been always ascribed. If any doubts can exist on this point, they must be traced to the nature of the contents, and not to any deficiency

The  
Gospels  
written by  
cotem-  
poraries,

<sup>1</sup> It was not of course to be expected that any one, however competent, but writing fifty years since, should deal critically—indeed, no serious believer would now so incline—with objections contrary to tradition, purely speculative, not to say gratuitous, adopted as a last resort, in order to thrust down the date of the Synoptics so low as A.D. 75–95, and that for no ostensible reason other than the announcement exhibited by each of the fall of Jerusalem. And yet even Caiaphas had said so much beforehand when he insisted that the Messianic excitement, if allowed to go forward, would end in bringing down the Roman power to sweep away the city and nation altogether.—En.

in the external evidence. Had the narrative related simply to the history of some remarkable war or civil revolution, or to any ordinary event in the annals of mankind, no question would ever have been raised on this head ; for it would not be outstripping the truth to say, that all the writings of antiquity put together do not possess the external proofs of genuineness which this single volume may justly claim.

they were  
translated,  
and the  
MSS. in  
all hands.

To say nothing of manuscripts (some of them of far higher antiquity than any similar documents now extant), and of distinct translations into all the principal languages of the ancient world, made in the century immediately succeeding that in which the Apostles lived,—there are quotations from these books to be found in ecclesiastical writers reaching up to the very age in which the books profess to have been composed ; and so numerous are these quotations in the next and every succeeding generation, as to imply that they were almost as familiarly known and referred to at that time as in the present day. It is not necessary to prove the truth of this statement. Any one who will take the trouble of reading Lardner's "Credibility of the Gospel History" will readily satisfy any doubts he may have entertained on this point.

What  
others are  
equally  
authenti-  
cated ?

Cæsar ?

Cicero ?

Contrast now the evidence which Lardner's volumes contain, with the proof which we possess of the authenticity of any other of the writings of the same, or indeed of any age. Upon what evidence is it that we believe the Commentaries of Cæsar to have been written by him ? Simply that we know from the Letters of Cicero that he wrote such a work, and that the same was extant in the days of Plutarch and Quintilian. But if we be asked, how do we know that the work in our possession is *that* which they

had read, and which Cicero speaks of with much commendation for the purity of its style and other merits? I know of no more direct proof of this, than that the style of the work in our hands answers to Cicero's character of it.

Suppose, in like manner, we were to be asked on what evidence we ground our belief of the "History of the Peloponnesian War" by Thucydides being a genuine composition? all that we can reply is, that from what is said by Cicero and Quintilian of the style of the work and of the obscurity of many parts of it, and from the remarks of Dionysius of Halicarnassus upon its contents, it is natural to conclude that they were speaking of the history now in our possession. This is the only direct *external* proof that we can mention. Nevertheless, although there are no manuscripts extant of any ancient date, no versions of this history into the languages of the age, and though the writers above mentioned lived not less than four hundred years after the age of Thucydides, yet we may reasonably believe that Cicero and Quintilian were in possession of evidence for what they said, and that testimony could then have been produced which is now lost; and were any one, in the face of this presumption, unsupported as it is by any positive proof, to declare that he believed the writings in question, or those of Cæsar and Virgil and others, to have been the fabrications of a later age,<sup>1</sup> merely because such an opinion would be hypothetically possible, and can be conceived,—it is probable his scepticism would be ascribed to the effect of an unsound mind.

Thucydides?

yet no sound mind can conceive the fabrication of these.

<sup>1</sup> As was attempted, from motives of *tendency*, by the otherwise laborious critic, P. Hardouin.—Ed.



But, in the New Testament, such not even hypothetically possible.

Even this supposition, however, is impossible in the case of the writings of the New Testament. The opinion that these were the fabrications of any subsequent age is *not* hypothetically possible, and cannot be conceived, unless we suppose it possible that all the writings of all the fathers, and of all the earliest ecclesiastical historians, have also been fabricated, as well as all the versions into the Syriac, the Coptic, the Armenian, and other languages, some of which have for many ages ceased even to be spoken.

Besides these marks of genuineness,

Having thus briefly adverted to some of the common proofs to show that the books of the New Testament are genuine, that is, written by the persons with whose names they have been inscribed, I shall now proceed briefly to make a few further remarks on this topic.

there is no shadow of inconsistency,

We cannot take up any work on this subject without noticing the sifting criticism to which these writings have been on all sides subjected. How laboriously is every date, every custom, every historical allusion, even every proper name, explained and discussed! How painfully is every objection, however slight, surveyed and pondered! How scrupulously is every suspicion, even the merest surmise, propounded as a matter of formal inquiry and research! Now, as the single writers profess only to relate what they had for the most part seen themselves or heard from others who *had*, it is not at all surprising to find that they have passed through this ordeal, severe as it has been. It only implies that they have said nothing except what they could speak to of their own knowledge. But when we consider that the scene of this history embraces many nations speaking different languages, with different customs

and laws and institutions, and add to this that the writers were not men of a critical and various knowledge, the fact admits no other explanation. That nothing has ever been adduced from any part of the volume which can be shown to be at variance with the history of the time, as otherwise known, or with the manners and customs of the different nations to whom it directly or indirectly refers, is alone a fact which, on a supposition of the books being mere fabrications, and of the writers not speaking of their own personal knowledge, but only from hearsay or imagination, would be a literary phenomenon, such as there is no other example of.

There is, in truth, no stamp of being genuine which an ancient history *can* exhibit which we do not find in this volume; neither can I mention a single indication of spuriousness in matters of fact which scholars have ever pointed out. And while all other ancient historians have been allowed to pass almost without examination, the writers of the New Testament have not only been put upon their trial without any specific charge, but, moreover, after every supposable accusation has been disproved, and every testimony of character which the ingenuity even of professed adversaries can require, been produced, still judgment is suspended. It would seem in some minds to be a question that is never to be set at rest. Every thing that is possible is put into the indictment, and must be rebutted as if it had been probable; while no answer is allowed to be put in unless it can be *demonstrated* to be true.

In the memorandum of a conversation with Dr. Johnson on his death-bed, preserved by the late Mr. Windham, the unfairness and inequality of such

or absence  
of any  
other con-  
ceivable  
mark of  
genuine-  
ness.

Dr. John-  
son's  
words,

a way of reasoning is pointed out. "*For revealed religion,*" said Dr. Johnson, "*there was such historical evidence as upon any subject not religious would have left no doubt. Had the facts recorded in the New Testament been mere civil occurrences, no one would have called in question the testimony by which they were established; but the importance annexed to them, amounting to nothing less than the salvation of mankind, raises a cloud in our minds, and creates doubts unknown to any other subject.*" About the fact itself here adverted to I do not think there will be any question; and Dr. Johnson, as we see, explains it by suggesting that the sacredness of the subject, and its great importance, obscures the clearness of the judgment. The same fact and the same explanation of it is adverted to at much length by Dr. Chalmers. He illustrates the former by instancing the forward assent which the understanding of the reader yields to the account of the death of Christ when read in the writings of Tacitus and Suetonius, compared with "the languid and ineffectual impression" made upon the mind by the same events when stated by St. Luke. "*The reason is,*" Dr. Chalmers says, and as Dr. Johnson had said before him, "*that there is a sacredness annexed to the subject so long as it is under the pen of the Evangelists which intimidates the understanding as by a spell, but which is dissipated the moment that we find the story in a profane author.*"

and Dr.  
Chalmers,

*valcant*  
*quantum,*  
but beside  
the point;

Now it is very possible that this may be a conspiring cause in the effect here alluded to. But surely the fact admits of a more simple and natural explanation; for it is not at first sight obvious why the importance or sacredness of a subject should

obscure the clearness of the understanding. Had the Annals of Tacitus been filled with the same kind of facts as we read in the New Testament, it is not likely that mankind would have reasoned differently in the two cases merely because Tacitus was a profane historian, and because the miracles related by him were heathen miracles. In ordinary cases what Chalmers says is beyond doubt: the testimony of men who were present at the transacting of events is of course to be preferred before the testimony of those who lived afterwards, and at a distance from the place where they happened. But then it must be remembered, in reference to the instance just now adverted to, that the facts of which Tacitus was speaking respecting Christ were facts simply historical, such as are conformable to common experience, and not such as had never before been heard of in any authentic profane history.

for had Tacitus but been a tissue of prodigies we should not have received his account.

The difference of the cases will be best explained by examples. Once more then let us take the account which Thucydides has left us of the Peloponnesian war. On what reasoning do we conclude that the events which are there related really happened? The answer is plain: that the account which he has given professes to have been written by one who was an eye-witness of many of the facts which he relates, and a cotemporary of them all. Writing as he did at the very time, it would be absurd to suppose that he would have given a detailed narrative of victories and sieges, and various public events of the same kind, if such events had never taken place; and still more absurd to suppose that if he had, the history would have been believed by his cotemporaries.

So too with Thucydides;

they show  
all marks  
of authen-  
ticity.

If, again, we are asked on what evidence it is that we affirm his history to have been written by a person living at the time, by that Thucydides, in short, the son of Olorus, whose name is mentioned in the third book? no proper reply can be given to this question until we know the reasons for asking it. In the absence of these, it is sufficient that the history has all the marks of authenticity; that is, it contains nothing which is inconsistent with the supposition of its being a cotemporary and veracious account; nor is there any hint in ancient writers of doubts having existed as to its genuineness.

No good  
reason for  
rejecting  
them,

A disputant, it is true, may still reply that this is only negative evidence, and perfectly compatible with the supposition of the books having been written after the events by a writer assuming the character of an eye-witness, and borrowing for that purpose the name of a person whom he mentions in the course of the narrative with the design of colouring his imposition. No doubt this is supposable, though not likely to be urged seriously or by men of sober understandings.

or doubt-  
ing good  
faith,

But the case will be materially altered if we change the circumstances, and instead of a series of military transactions, such as are agreeable to what commonly takes place among rival states, or such mutations and revolutions as all human affairs are liable to, we suppose the history to be filled with a detail of wonders and prodigies of various kinds. In ordinary cases, indeed, this would only affect the credit of the history, and not the evidence of its authorship. No one disputes the *genuineness* of Plutarch's Lives, though he appears to have believed in many incredible stories; nor regards the History of Livy as spurious, though it contains many improbable things. Both do

even  
though  
certain  
prodigies  
be  
chronicled.



but report reports. It is easy to distinguish between the historian and the facts which he relates, and to esteem the former at his just value, while we throw aside the latter as mere instances of popular superstition.

The credit, however, of an historian, would not be maintained where events of an utterly improbable kind formed the continuous *groundwork* of the narrative. If an account of the civil war, after the death of Julius Cæsar, had come down to us, in which the success of the triumphant party had been made to result from miraculous interpositions and preternatural agents, instead of victories or other advantages, whether in the field or in the council, we should in vain appeal to the name of the author, or allege the evidence of his character. The history would not be believed, even if it were ascribed to Cato of Utica. People would question the truth of this last assertion, and doubt its being the work of a cotemporary; or if that were rendered certain, they would not therefore credit his account of facts. Still, if it could be demonstrated beyond all possible controversy that such had been the *belief* of mankind as to the agency by which the success of Octavius had been obtained; if this was alluded to in the Letters of Cicero, adverted to by Livy, mentioned by Horace, and in the next generation spoken of by Tacitus and Suetonius and Plutarch, as matter of public notoriety;—on this supposition the whole aspect of the argument is once more changed. We may now think as we please about the facts, but the *veracity* at least of the historian by whom they were related is freed from suspicion. It is clear that he has only reported what he believed in common with all the rest of mankind.

But this would not hold in secular history, were the very tissue marvelous.

We may doubt his judgment, and suspect their credulity ; but we are not at liberty to question either the genuineness or the authenticity of the history, neither to deny its having been written by the author whose name it bears, nor to disbelieve that he was a cotemporary with the facts which he has related, or that he was speaking of them from his own knowledge.

Neverthe-  
less, had  
they been  
transacted  
under cir-  
cum-  
stances  
similar to  
those  
wrought  
in Pales-  
tine, what  
was *seen*  
must have  
*happened*,  
however  
weak the  
inference  
might be.

A question may still, however, remain as to the reality of the facts themselves so accepted : that will depend upon circumstantial evidence. If they were such as might have been mere hearsay ; if only two or three witnesses were cognizant of them, or if they were not believed till many years after they were described to have happened,—the solution would perhaps be easy. But if the contrary of all this was the case ; if they were transacted before many witnesses, and under circumstances which would make it impossible for mankind to have been deceived in the matter of fact, then the events must at least really have happened. For what was actually *seen* by the witnesses, explain it as we may, must really have happened, however weak or superstitious we suppose the conclusion to have been which was by them deduced from the phenomenon.

## CHAPTER VI.

### INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THE GENUINENESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Extent and variety of this evidence—Undesigned coincidences—“*Horæ Paulinæ*”—The Talmud, its date—Undesigned coincidences between passages from St. Matthew’s Gospel and the Talmud.

IN what has hitherto been said, I have chiefly had in view the external proofs of authenticity which belong to the historical parts of the New Testament. But the *internal* proofs are, I think, not less conclusive; so much so, that even supposing all external proofs to be lost; and that we knew nothing of the names of the writers, and that the documents in our hands existed only in manuscripts, and had recently been brought to light for the first time; yet the very composition of the books is stamped with so many internal marks of a living authority, that it would not be difficult to show from them alone that the history was *real*, and, moreover, that it had been composed at Jerusalem or in Palestine by a Hebrew who was describing facts, and relating actual conversations and discourses, at some of which the writer *must* himself have been present.

As these books purport to have been written by eye-witnesses, and by persons, some of whom were parties in the events described, it is plain that if

So much  
for the ex-  
ternal  
proof. As  
for the in-  
ternal,

the books  
purport to  
be by eye-  
witnesses.

they had been merely put together from report, like Philostratus's Life of Apollonius Tyanæus,<sup>1</sup> or other historical biographies, the language and character adopted by the writers must have been feigned by them for the purpose of personating the Apostles, and have been the effect of *premeditation* and *design*. It is not always easy to prove a negative, yet in the case of the four Gospels we shall see that this supposition is next to impossible.

In case of Paul's Epistles, and the Acts, this is demonstrable ;

In the case of St. Paul's Epistles, and of the Acts of the Apostles, the difficulties of such a supposition are demonstrated by Paley, in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*," with arguments which silence all dispute. This work is often considered as the most original and characteristic of any of his writings ; indeed there are few compositions in the language more justly to be admired. As a specimen of forensic reasoning it is almost unrivalled.

for the coincidences here are such that no other theory is conceivable,

Paley's proposition is, that between St. Paul's Epistles, and the history of his life, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, there are coincidences and agreements of such a nature, as that if we suppose these writings to be put into the hands of a critic, without comment or remark, and destitute of any extrinsic, or collateral evidence, yet it would be possible for him to show that the "persons and transactions must have been real, the letters authentic, and the narration in the main true."

as Paley shows.

His argument is, that "*between the letters which bear the name of St. Paul, and his history in the*

<sup>1</sup> Apollonius, a Pythagorean, cotemporary with Jesus, left a reputation as a theurgist ; but nothing is known of him but from the legend by Philostratus, written about A.D. 200. This last was a sophist warmly patronized by the Empress Julia, wife of the eclectic Severus, who placed an effigy of Jesus by the *side* of Apollonius in his own chapel.—Ed.

*Acts, there exist many notes of correspondence. The simple perusal of the writings is sufficient to prove, that neither the history was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the history. And the undesignedness of the agreements (which undesignedness is gathered from their latency, their minuteness, their obliquity, and the suitableness of the circumstances in which they consist, to the places in which those circumstances occur, and the circuitous references by which they are traced out) demonstrates that they have not been produced by premeditation, or by any fraudulent contrivance. But coincidences, from which these causes are excluded, and which are too close and numerous to be accounted for by accidental occurrences of fiction, must necessarily have truth for their foundation."*<sup>1</sup>

The same argument was applied by Paley to the four Gospels, not, however, with equal fulness of logical effect, because here the *undesignedness* was more difficult of demonstration. He gathers his proofs from reasons incidental to the particular passages which he produces, and not, as in the "*Horæ Paulinæ*,"<sup>2</sup> from a comparison of two distinct authorities, each, so far as his argument was concerned, independent of the other. I think, however, that pursuing the same line of reasoning, at least in the case of St. Matthew's Gospel, we may verify its authenticity by another document, from coincidences and other marks of truth, quite as impossible to have

But same test may be applied to St. Matthew,

<sup>1</sup> *Evidences*, Part II. ch. vii.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the letters of St. Paul being confessedly genuine, the matter of the Acts, so far as it falls in by quite undesigned coincidence with the Letters, cannot but be true, the opposite chances for a series of coincidences in error being scarcely conceivable. "Thus," says Paley, "when we put together two parts of a cloven tally, mere coincidence proves the authenticity of both."—Ed.



been the effect of collusion or of mere chance, as are the instances produced by Paley in the case of the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles of St. Paul.

compared  
with Tal-  
mud,

The Jews divide their law into written and unwritten. The written law is contained in the Pentateuch; the unwritten has been handed down by a tradition which, until many years subsequent to our æra, was entirely oral. About the year 250 these traditions were collected together for the first time, and compiled into the volume called the Jerusalem Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is more extensive but was not compiled before the fifth century. It is therefore quite clear that St. Matthew and the writers of the New Testament had no knowledge of either of these works; and it can hardly be necessary to state the reasons for saying that the compilers of the Talmud did not borrow from the New Testament. Any coincidences and agreements, therefore, to be found between them, must of necessity be *undesigned*. On the part of the Evangelists the contrary supposition is impossible. The use to be made of the Talmud, in the way I am here pointing out, will be easily understood by a few examples. As these instances occur almost exclusively in St. Matthew's Gospel, it may be proper to explain, that the three other Gospels do not assume to have been written at Jerusalem, nor for Jews. When Jewish customs, or opinions, or laws are alluded to in St. Mark, it is commonly with some explanatory phrase, such as "the Jews have a custom," or "there is at Jerusalem;" evidently indicating that the readers are supposed to be persons requiring to be informed on such points. But though such allusions are much more numerous in St. Matthew's Gospel, than in all the other writings

of the New Testament put together, yet he always assumes on the part of his readers a previous familiarity with all the circumstantial particulars, whether local or national.

If the reader will take up the Gospel of St. Matthew, with the Talmudical Exercitations of Lightfoot and Schoettgen lying before him, he will find in almost every other page of this Evangelist instances of undesigned allusions to illustrate what I have been saying. I will begin with the "Sermon on the Mount:" and we shall better understand the force of some of the instances I shall adduce from it, if I preface them with two or three remarks of Lightfoot on the Service of the Synagogue, which will at the same time exemplify the argument before us.

as may be gathered from Schoettgen and Lightfoot ;

The first duty of the minister, or server, or as he was called, the "Angel of the Synagogue," after the service had begun, was to call out seven readers, each of whom read out to the people a separate portion of Scripture. (This custom is indicated by St. Luke,<sup>1</sup> where Christ, being in the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, "stood up for to read.") By the side of him who was called upon to read the law was placed the Targumist, or interpreter, who rendered what was read out of the Hebrew into the vernacular tongue, enlarging sometimes on the text in the way of paraphrase. This, together with prayers, formed the morning service. After dinner the people returned to what may be called a lecture, in which one of their doctors expounded, not the Scripture, but some traditional matter. Concerning this latter part of the service, there are three particulars to be noticed. "*He that read to the auditors,*" says Lightfoot

<sup>1</sup> Chap. iv. 16.

(quoting, as he always does, the words of the Midrash), "*spake not out with an audible voice, but muttered it with a small whisper in somebody's ear, who pronounced it aloud to all the people.*" Another Jewish custom is mentioned by Lightfoot from the Talmud, where it is said that on the Sabbath-eve, the minister, or Angel of the Synagogue, "*sounded a trumpet from the roof of a high house, that all might have notice of the coming in of the Sabbath.*"

Now if we put these two together, we may better understand that passage of St. Matthew, where Christ tells His disciples, "What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the housetops;" but it is plain that the allusion must have been lost to any one, except a native of Judæa or Jerusalem; so much so, that it would appear to have escaped the notice of St. Luke,<sup>1</sup> who, from not being acquainted with the particulars which Lightfoot has drawn from the Talmud, while giving the true meaning of the words of Christ in the parallel passage of his Gospel, would seem to have overlooked, or not rightly apprehended, the exact force of our Saviour's form of expression.

The above passage of Lightfoot also throws light upon a peculiarity of our Saviour's teaching, in often contrasting the precepts which He delivers, with the doctrines which His hearers were accustomed to; saying, "Ye have heard that it hath been said of old," or "it hath been said." These were familiar forms of speech among the Jewish doctors, when adducing a tradition. In many passages, our Lord's words are given, as explicitly animadverting on some

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xii. 3, "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

well-known tradition ; but in the majority of instances, the knowledge of so much in his hearers is taken for granted without any explanation. The reflex application to doctrines and opinions seated in the minds of his hearers is left to themselves, as it safely might be, supposing them to be Jews and living at Jerusalem ; but so little was a knowledge of such application on the part of any readers a thing to be taken for granted, except on this supposition, of their being on the scene themselves, that no penetration could have otherwise *divined* the fact ; neither should we *now* know it, except for the light which has been afforded from Talmudical learning.

For example, our Lord says, “Whosoever shall break one of these *least commandments*, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” The words of St. Matthew, we may observe, are not “one of the least of these commandments,” but “one of these least commandments,” τῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων. It is evident from the context, that our Saviour did not mean, as might perhaps have been supposed, the commandments of the ceremonial law, but the commandments of the moral law. But in what sense could He designate the last as “these least commandments” ? By referring to Schoettgen’s comment on the passage, it will appear that Christ was speaking according to the sense of His hearers, who had been taught so to speak of the moral precepts of the law, and not according to His own sense, nor indeed according to any sense, except that of the Jewish doctors. It is plain from the words, “*these* least commandments,” that there is a latent allusion to something that had been said before, which would have determined our Saviour’s meaning, but was not

wanted by those for whom St. Matthew was writing: an omission, we may observe, strongly characteristic of a real transaction.<sup>1</sup>

Two or three verses farther on, our Lord is made to say, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." The meaning of this is unambiguous, and of evident application. But the circumstantial part of the precept, about leaving the gift at the altar, is purely of Jewish obligation, and must have been delivered not only to Jews, but to Jews at Jerusalem, for no where else could the precept have been obeyed. But what law or custom is it which is here presupposed? "If thou bring thy gift to the altar;"—what gift?—what altar? The Old Testament gives us no insight into these particulars, and the context leaves us equally at a loss. But on referring to the Talmud we discover an allusion to certain doctrines and observances of the Jews, which being familiarly known to those whom our Saviour was addressing, He left not explained. We learn, however, from Lightfoot, that the Hebrew lawyers speak much of the causes which may justify a man in putting off the offering which he was about to present at the altar. They are chiefly some blemish in the sacrifice, or some uncleanness in the

<sup>1</sup> It was the opinion of the Jews that the moral law was ever since the seven precepts (monotheism was the first) given to his sons by Noah—of which the Divine Decalogue was but a republication—obligatory on the entire human race; but the law ceremonial only upon themselves. Thence the latter came to be the more important, as an especial privilege and source of merit for Israel alone. Hence the obvious question, "What *advantage* then hath the Jew?" *i.e.* over the pious Gentile.—Ed.



votary. But our Saviour, with a tacit allusion to this, which "they had heard of old," tells his hearers of a new cause, and one not mentioned by their lawyers; namely, that if a person recollects not merely any uncleanness or outward unfitness in himself, but that his brother hath ought against him, he is to delay his sacrifice until reconciliation be made. In this precept of Christ there is, as has been said, internal evidence of its having been delivered to a Jewish audience, and at Jerusalem. No one living at Rome or Antioch, or any where out of Judæa, would have enjoined the circumstantial part of the precept, or having done so, have left so much of his meaning to be supplied.

To proceed with the Sermon on the Mount. A few verses farther on, our Saviour commands his disciples to "perform to the Lord their oaths," and then forbids their using any forms of abjuration:<sup>1</sup> "but I say unto you, Swear not at all." This is easily understood; but why add that they are not to swear by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by their heads, nor by the temple, nor by the altar, nor by the gift that is upon the altar, nor by the city of Jerusalem, except He was addressing persons among whom these forms of swearing was customary? This fact is not expressed in our Saviour's words, but they more than imply it. Accordingly, if we turn to Lightfoot, we find that all these oaths were frequent among the Jews at Jerusalem; and Maimonides lets us into the error which was the probable object of our Saviour's reproof. "If any swear by heaven, by earth, by the sun, etc., although the mind of the swearer be under these words to swear by Him who created them, *yet this is not an oath*. Or if any swear by one of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 33; xxiii. 19.

prophets, or by some of the books of Scripture, although the sense of the swearer be to swear by Him who sent the prophet, or gave the book, nevertheless this is not an oath." To the same purpose is the Midrash quoted by Lightfoot. R. Judah saith, "He that saith by Jerusalem, saith nothing, unless with an intent purpose he shall vow towards Jerusalem." This kind of equivocation was plainly the occasion of the precept, "Swear not at all; but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay,"<sup>1</sup>—a meaning which was doubtless well understood by those to whom Christ was speaking, but which cannot be collected from His words, as reported by St. Matthew.

Again, what people, except the Jewish, would require to be warned against praying in the corners of the streets, or at least would have exposed themselves to the ridicule of such a practice at Rome or Corinth? That such a practice prevailed amongst the Jews is, however, plain from the extracts which Lightfoot produces. "R. Johanna said, standing and praying in the streets of Isippor, and going four cubits, and then praying the additional prayer."

It is, I think, plain, from these illustrations derived from the stores of Jewish learning, that our Lord's Sermon on the Mount was an actual discourse, and one not addressed to readers, but to *hearers*, and those Jews living in Palestine while Jerusalem stood. The same reasoning will apply to other parts of St. Matthew's Gospel. For example, we are told that, when our Lord ended his discourse, "the people were astonished at his doctrine; for He taught them as *one having authority, and not as the scribes.*" Now how did *the scribes teach*, and what did the people allude

<sup>1</sup> See also Matt. xxiii. 20–22.

to, when they said that our Lord preached not like them, but as one *having authority*? The answer to this question is not to be obtained from any passage of Scripture; but if we consult the Preface of Maimonides to the *Porta Mosis*, in which he gives us an account of the Mischnical and Talmudical doctors, the meaning becomes clear. We there learn that the proper office of the Rabbi was not to offer his own interpretations and opinions, that is, “not to speak as one having authority,” but only to hand down the tradition which has been transmitted, as the Jews believe, from doctor to doctor, and from generation to generation, through the men of the great synagogue up to the time of Moses, and down to Rabbi Jehuda, who compiled the Mischna. “Hillel taught truly,” says the Talmud, “and according to the tradition of the matter in question; but although he discoursed of that question all day long, they received not his doctrine, until he said at last, ‘*So I heard from Shemata and Abtalion.*’” We see from this passage, that when the people said that Christ “spake not as the scribes, but as one having authority,” that He did not fortify what He said from the sayings of other teachers before Him, but as one who expected to be believed on His own authority. If, however, St. Matthew, or whoever was the writer of his Gospel, had been writing a feigned narrative, and not relating an actual occurrence, he would not have left the sense of a passage, the object of which was to show the impression which our Lord’s discourse had produced upon the minds of the people, wrapped up in an illusion so obscure as not to be immediately obvious even to a Jew of the present day, but which must have been entirely lost upon the general reader.

The above examples are taken from St. Matthew's account of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount: examples plainly indicating that the precepts recorded must have actually been spoken; and this we collect, not so much from what He is made to say, as from the things which He does *not* say, but which He certainly would have expressed in a *written* discourse, or in one intended for any audience not composed of Jews.

It may seem needless to multiply proofs of this kind; but as St. Matthew's Gospel has been more disputed than any other by Schleiermacher and Strauss, and other German critics, I am tempted to adduce from other places in this Evangelist various passages marking the authenticity of this particular Gospel with a stamp that would appear to supersede all merely philological reasoning; but I shall content myself with only two more instances. The first is from the answer of our Lord to the Pharisees, when they attempted to "entrap Him in his talk," by asking Him "whether it was lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not." The calmness and dignity of our Saviour's answer has been often remarked, but its full and exact significance cannot be collected from the words of St. Matthew. In His reply, our Lord evaded the dilemma on which the Pharisees had hoped to fix Him; but according to our notions it contained no answer, either direct or indirect, to the question proposed; for the common currency of a coin with Cæsar's head and name upon it was no proof, as we should think, of his lawful claim to tribute. But, as addressed to the Pharisees, our Lord's words had a signification which they do not immediately convey to our minds. Lightfoot tells us that it was one

among the determinations of their schools, that "where-soever the money of any king is current, there the inhabitants acknowledge that king for their lord. Hence is that passage of the Jerus. Sanhedr. r. *Abigail said to David, What evil have I done, or my sons, or my cattle? He answered, Your husband vilifies my kingdom. Are you then a king? to which he replied, Did not Samuel anoint me for a king? She replied the money of our Lord Saul is current; that is, Is not Saul to be accounted king, while his money is still received commonly by us all?"* It would seem, therefore, that our Saviour, in His reply to the Pharisees, not only turned aside the snare which was laid for Him, but made it dangerous for them to attempt any rejoinder, lest they should fall into the difficulty they had prepared for Him. "They marvelled at his answer, and held their peace;" at once penetrating his meaning, as He had penetrated theirs.

The last example which I shall produce is from St. Matthew,<sup>1</sup> where it is related that one of the disciples said to our Lord, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." As we read this passage in the Gospel, and without note or comment, the meaning is not full, nor very clear; but if we refer to Schoettgen's exercitation upon it, it would seem to involve more latent allusions, both to fact and doctrine, than are often contained in so few words. A man, according to the Talmud, is bound to observe only one precept at a time; and the care of the dead supersedes the obligation of attending to any other precept. The man, therefore, in the above

<sup>1</sup> Chap. viii. 22.



passage, would seem to have had this precept in his memory, when he besought Christ to allow him to "go first and bury his father;" and when Jesus in His reply bade him "Follow thou me," and "let the dead bury their dead," the recollection of the same precept appears to have been in our Saviour's mind. This answer, however, is not to be understood as if our Lord meant to treat lightly the duty of caring for the dead, but only meant to take that opportunity of signifying that the *first* duty of all was to be His disciple; and that if any other duty were found incompatible with this, it was that other which was to give way. Schoettgen tells us, that by the "dead" who were to "bury their dead," was meant the "mourners," who, it appears from the Talmud, were so designated by the Jews. The doctrine here enjoined does not differ from the general teaching of Christ—that whosoever loved father, or mother, or houses, or lands, or any other good, more than Him, is not worthy of Him; but how many circumstances are left to be filled up, before the full meaning, as I before said, of the passage, as given in St. Matthew, can be thus made out!

all of which show that the writer was a Jew, in Palestine, while Temple yet stood.

I think the passages here produced, and the number of them might easily be increased, will suffice to satisfy any reasonable inquirer, however sceptically inclined, that the Gospel of St. Matthew, be the writer who he may, must have had, not merely a Hebrew origin, but that it must have been the production of a Hebrew living at Jerusalem while the city was yet standing, and who must have been both an eye and ear witness of much that he relates.

We have seen that the sayings ascribed to Christ are many of them founded upon ways of thinking

among the Jews, which none but a Jew could know. Sometimes the narrative supposes a previous conversation or communication ; sometimes the immediate neighbourhood of the temple, or a particular season of the year, or other incidental matter not directly adverted to by the writer, must be supplied by the reader ; and supplied from a knowledge derived from sources of information quite independent of the history, and to which, as in the case of the Talmud, it is certain that the writer could not have had access. In short, there is scarcely a page in which the reader is not made to perceive that the work before him is simply that of a cotemporary of the facts : the incidents which he records are often such as none but an *eye-witness* would have remembered, and the sayings stamped with such marks of oral delivery as no writer describing from his imagination, and not from actual memory, could have fallen upon by accident, or have invented through design.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HUME'S HYPOTHESIS.

Gospel narrative believed at the time—Hume's explanation—  
Hume's hypothesis examined—Men naturally slow to believe  
what opposes their prejudices and passions—Difference of  
success of Christianity at first ; and of modern missions, ex-  
plained—Hume's hypothesis not sufficient to account for men's  
changing their conduct and opinions, and suffering martyrdom  
—Foregoing remarks illustrated and confirmed.

We have shown then the reality of the *facts*, while the present *belief* also of mankind is the same as that of those who lived at the time, CONFINING ourselves to an investigation of the bare facts out of which the belief of the Divinity of the Gospel system arose, I am not aware of any material difficulty which the inquiry presents, except such as are incident to all historical discussions. The actual acceptance by mankind of the Divine authority of the Gospel does not require to be proved, any more than the point that this present conviction is founded upon a further belief in the original facts as related in the Gospels ; and after what has been observed, I do not think it necessary farther to enlarge upon the evidence for saying that the present belief of mankind is identical also with what was entertained by those who lived at the time when those facts really happened ; for, otherwise, by what process of reasoning was it that so many thousands of persons living at the time, and many of them upon the spot, came to believe and act upon the conviction of their reality ?

a phe-  
nomenon

The following, however, is Hume's explanation of

this phenomenon : “ *We readily,*” he says, “ *reject* for which Hume accounts by love of the marvellous. *any fact which is unusual or incredible in any ordinary degree ; yet in advancing further, the mind observes not the same rule ; but when anything is affirmed utterly absurd or miraculous, it rather the more readily admits of such a fact, upon account of that very circumstance which ought to destroy all its authority. The passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards the belief of those events from which it is derived. And this goes so far, that even those who cannot enjoy this pleasure immediately, nor can believe those miraculous events of which they are informed, yet love to partake of the satisfaction at second-hand, or by rebound, and place a pride and delight in exciting the admiration of others.*”

This is a general truth, applicable, it seems, to all mankind, whether wise or unwise ; and to all facts pretending to be miraculous, whether resting on any assumed evidence or not. He then goes on to apply it to the particular case, it is to be presumed, of the Christian miracles. “ *But if the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense ; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority. A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality. He may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause : or even where this delusion has not place, vanity, excited by so strong a temptation, operates upon him more powerfully than on the rest of mankind in any other circumstances ; and self-interest with equal force.*”

But where religious enthusiasm comes in, says Hume, testimony goes for nothing.

*His auditors may not have, and commonly have not, sufficient judgment to canvass his evidence. What judgment they have, they renounce on principle, in these sublime and mysterious subjects. Or if they were willing to employ it, their credulity increases his impudence, and his impudence overpowers their credulity."*

Now be it that the facts related in the New Testament were true or false, that the writers were honest or dishonest, that their narrative was believed by the immediate followers only of Christ, or by the whole Jewish nation,—it will still be true,—or rather it will still be a truism, that mankind are prone to self-delusion; that knaves will practise frauds, and fools believe them. But omitting what is rather talk than argument, and directing our attention to that part of Hume's explanation which has any relation to the facts of the case, it would seem that even he assumes the belief, at least, of Christianity to have existed from the beginning. He ascribes it however to two causes. He tells us that "*it arose in fraud and imposture, and was propagated from the agreeableness of the emotions of surprise and wonder.*" The position on which he builds this explanation is, that "though mankind readily reject any fact which is unusual and incredible in an *ordinary* degree," yet that "when any thing is affirmed which is utterly *absurd* and *miraculous*, the pleasure of the emotions which it excites causes it to be believed without any evidence at all," even when it exposes the subject to loss and blows.

It arose, says Hume, out of fraud, and love of the marvellous.

A whimsical hypothesis.

This at first sight would seem to be a whimsical sort of hypothesis to account for an event of such grave importance to mankind as the establishment of Christianity has commonly been accounted. The



truth and adequacy of the explanation are, however, assumed by the philosopher as a matter not to be disputed. But it is not necessary to discuss it farther than to say that, however satisfactorily it might account for the reception by individuals of some monastic legend, yet we must resort to some other explanation of their belief of the facts, whether they be or be not absurd, which are related in the New Testament.

For that these marvels were confessed by the Apostles themselves, and by their immediate followers, cannot be made a question. A sophist, no doubt, may deny any proposition, however plain, which does not happen to involve a speculative absurdity ; and it must always be open to a person so inclined to refuse his assent, in this sense, to any historical fact whatever. But so far as historical proof may be relied upon, we have seen that in strictness of speech the facts which we read in the Gospels were by no means denied in the age to which they are ascribed, even by those who repudiated altogether the authority of Jesus. If we examine with closeness Hume's reasoning, the upshot even of *his* opinion would not seem to be that he supposes mankind in the beginning to have *disbelieved* the miracles of Christ, but only that numbers who embraced his religion not being scholars, or critics had instituted no inquiry into the facts but admitted them at once from the mere love of the marvellous, and on the report of persons who were interested to deceive.

Now I am not going to maintain that an event is always to be believed, however marvellous it may be, provided a large number of persons living at the time when it is said to have happened had agreed to think

There is nothing which a sophist may not deny,

but history shows the facts were not denied by those even who rejected the Lord, which Hume indeed admits, but says they were uncritical.

True, men may be persuaded by passion,

but they  
also reject  
the plainest  
truths, if  
contrary  
to preju-  
dice.

it true ; because, as every one must have observed, it costs most people but little to persuade themselves of any thing which falls in with their interest, or their wishes, or previous habits of thinking. But the same experience of human nature on which this observation is founded, also tells us, with Pascal, that mankind are equally unwilling, and for the like reason, to receive even the most demonstrable truths or the most certain facts, if they are in any way *opposed* to their prejudices or passions. This proposition may safely be predicated, in one degree or another, of every individual, as well as of mankind in general ; and in the case of Christianity we have the warrant of the largest experience for its truth.

Hence a  
great diffi-  
culty for  
modern  
missions.

The history of modern missions has shown that there is nothing in the world more difficult than to persuade a people to renounce the religion in the customs of which they were born and educated, however monstrous or absurd its practice ; and this even in the case where *external* motives would seem to unite in recommendation of a more rational belief. If, then, the adoption of such novelties, as Hume's supposition implies, were found, in experience, an easy process, what reason can we assign why the case of the Apostolic missionaries should have been such an exception to the rule ? The proneness of mankind to superstition, their love of the marvellous, are the same ; the truths inculcated are the same. Where, then, is the cause of the difference in the success of the mission, except in this important point : that in the present day our knowledge rests on the less vivid evidence of history, and appeals only to the reason of mankind ; whereas the Apostles were able to appeal to facts of public notoriety, and such as every man, if he

pleased, might know to be true or false on his own personal knowledge?

It may be contended, no doubt, that easy as it might have been for the early Christians to obtain the best evidence, yet that the majority of mankind would have been satisfied with popular report and surmise. But if this were so, this ought to be shown, for all general presumption lies the other way. Why is Hume, or any one, to assume, in the face of all that we know of the ordinary principles of human nature, that mankind eighteen hundred years ago were willing to abandon all the prejudices of every kind in which they had been born and educated,—in defiance of every intelligible motive, whether of ease, or interest, or influence,—for the sake of a set of opinions, about the truth or falsehood of which he supposes them at the same time to be so indifferent, as not to have thought it worth while even to have instituted inquiry?

The supposition appears to me at variance, not only with all the natural principles of the human mind, but to be contradicted, in the particular case of Christianity, by the whole of the facts which history has preserved to us, relative to its first propagation. And here I am not speaking of the marvellous rapidity with which, as is well known, it spread throughout the world, but of the conduct of the early disciples; of their actions and whole behaviour under the influence of the new opinions in religion which they had taken up with so much eagerness. The account which history has transmitted to us, not only of their sufferings, but of their character, is not to be reconciled with the explanation of their having embraced those opinions from no higher motive than levity of mind or mere vulgar credulity.

Hume says, men conformed on hearsay,

but the troubles they incurred makes for the other view,

and shows they did not act from levity or cupidity;

for, in religious custom, prescription is powerful in absence of strong motive for change.

It is true that when men have been accustomed from their early youth to acquiesce in certain systems of opinion, it becomes difficult to eject their notions by any process of mere reason ; as in the principles of law, so also in this case, long *prescription* stands in the place of all other arguments. But the contrary effect as evidently happens in the case of *new* modes, especially of religious belief. Here the presumption presses in the other direction ; and if counterbalanced at all, it must be by new and unforeseen motives of some kind. If we are to believe Hume, the love of the *marvellous* is a principle of the mind which will solve every difficulty. But the love of the marvellous, if so, has always been a part of human nature ; and yet, if we except the instance of Christianity, we are informed of no other example in history where it alone has effected any sudden and permanent revolution in the conduct and opinions of mankind. It is difficult to understand how it could produce this effect in the case even of an individual. It hardly sounds like common sense to say that a man suffered torture and death, or that he renounced all the opinions and prejudices of his education, or that he changed his principles of conduct, because he had become enamoured of the marvellous. Such revulsion surely presupposes other and more powerful motives ; the operation of some principle of belief besides mere imagination or blind credulity ; and one which, even if founded in error, must yet have rooted itself in a more deeply-seated instinct of the mind than the mere proneness to welcome what even seems wonderful.

Was love of the marvellous motive enough for change and for torture ?

Socrates did not denounce popular faith in

The opinion of Socrates on the subject of the vulgar heathenism cannot be mistaken ; but when called before the Areopagus to clear himself of the

charge of having treated it with contempt, did he maintain his opinion before his judges? Far from it; as indeed why should he? To have suffered death for the truth of a philosophical opinion, or by way of protest against an irremediable superstition, would hardly, according to the maxims of antiquity, have been deemed suitable to the character of a wise man or a sage. What we now understand by the words *martyrdom*<sup>1</sup> is a thought which did not then exist, even in idea; there was no such word in the Latin language, nor indeed in the Greek either, in the sense attached to it by us. "*It has been written,*" says Justin (himself a martyr), "*that God at first gave the sun for mankind to adore; yet no one was ever found that would submit to die for his belief in the sun. But we may see many in every rank of men, who, on account of the name of Jesus, have borne every extremity of suffering, and are still willing to bear it, rather than deny their faith in Him.*"

court.  
Why  
should he?

The very  
notion,  
*martyr-*  
*dom*, did  
not then  
exist.

The fact here adverted to by Justin, strongly marks how great a difference there is between a mere popular persuasion, and the reality which the first Christians attached to their belief. And I may add, that not only was Justin struck with the contrast, but it attracted the notice of the heathens also at the time. "*Is it possible,*" says Epictetus, speaking of the trust which men ought to repose in a Divine providence, "*that a man may become indifferent to the menaces and power of a tyrant, from madness or habit, like the Galilæans, and yet that no one should have learned*"

But look  
to Justin,

and Epictet-  
tus.

<sup>1</sup> Mors violenta ultro suscepta ob amorem Jesu Christi (sc. ne negaverit). And so different in kind from the natural "magnanimity" (Arist. "Eth.") otherwise respectable, which may forfeit life itself, rather than abandon a cause, or retreat from a published opinion.—Ed.



This  
patience of  
theirs does  
not *prove*  
their re-  
ligion,

*this intrepidity of mind, from reason and from a demonstration, that God is the ruler of the world?"*

but evinces  
a deeper  
motive at  
bottom  
than that  
which  
Hume  
names.

I do not adduce the persecutions which it is well known that the first Christians endured, from the very beginning, on account of their religion, as a direct proof that the belief for which they suffered was true, though the fact is not easy to understand on the contrary supposition; but it is at least a presumption that there must have been a much stronger motive at the bottom of their belief than that fervid feeling which Hume supposes. And to this point, namely, the cogency of such deeper motive, we have an argument more decisive than even the sufferings which so many of the early Christians endured in testimony of their convictions; and that is, the remarkable effect which the new persuasions produced in the moral regulation of their daily conduct and habits.

See too  
the great  
change in  
habit and  
*moral*  
conduct,

In the well-known letter of Pliny the Younger to Trajan, in which he consults the emperor about the measures to be taken for repressing the spread of Christianity in his province, he tells Trajan of "the contumacy and inflexible obstinacy" of those he had summoned before him. Their religion itself he describes as "a degraded superstition," yet he admits that he had been able to discover nothing singular in their behaviour, "except that they were wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves, alternately, a hymn to Christ as *God*; binding themselves by a vow not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to restore it."

for men  
do not be-  
come just,

Now, although mankind will often resist tyranny and injustice from what oppressive rulers designate

obstinacy, and which in one sense is so, yet they do not become just and temperate and faithful to their word from obstinacy any more than from love of the marvellous. This last effect of Christianity upon the lives of its original followers, although it may not strike the imagination so forcibly as their patient sufferings, yet is it in truth a still more unequivocal proof, if possible, of the depth and earnestness of their conviction in the reality of their belief. Mankind did not hear for the first time, from the preaching of the Apostles, that they were not to rob, or cheat, or falsify their word, or violate their pledges. These duties had always been inculcated in the laws of every civilized people. Yet it seems, from the words of Pliny, that the motives proposed by the Apostles had been more effective than either the persuasions of moralists or the threatenings of the magistrate. "I know not how it is," says Plato, quoted by Cicero, "but it seems to me that all other kinds of learning may be taught mankind without much difficulty: that which it is so difficult to find out, is the way by which they may be taught to be *just* and honest."

Here, then, we have a problem to solve, in which we derive no light to help us from any parallel example. What neither Pythagoras, nor Socrates, nor Plato had been able to accomplish in many hundred years, was compassed within the course of a single generation by the Founder of Christianity, without aid from instruction, or rank, or power, or eloquence, or party: but only by the belief, so far as we know or can conjecture, which he impressed upon his followers of his having been sent from *God*. "*How did it happen,*" says Origen to Celsus, who had taunted the Christians with the recency of their faith, "*that in so*

chaste,  
truthful,  
from love  
of the mar-  
vellous;

yet to  
effect this  
had hither-  
to been the  
despair of  
the wise.  
See  
Origen.

*few years so many both of the learned and ignorant had been brought to embrace the Gospel; and not to embrace it as a mere speculative truth, but to be willing to lay down their lives rather than renounce it? A physician," he goes on to say, "cannot restore a sick man to health without God's permission; but to reclaim a man from sin of every kind, from lust, from sensuality, from cruelty, from fraud, is a much more difficult task, as any man may know who tries it, than to cure him of bodily ailments. Now, had Christ reclaimed only an hundred persons by the strength of His doctrine, it would have been an extraordinary thing; but to have reclaimed thousands and tens of thousands, both of Greeks and Barbarians, both of rich and poor, both wise and ignorant, from the wickedness in which they were living, and to have led them to embrace a life of holiness, is surely as strong an argument of Divine power as can be given. He who considers this," Origen concludes with observing, "will see that Jesus undertook a more than human task, and what He undertook He accomplished."*

Men easily  
shift  
opinions,  
but not  
deep-seated  
moral  
habits.

I do not ask an adversary to admit the Divine origin of Christianity simply on the principle which Origen, in this passage, is reasoning from; but I do feel inclined to think that the more we reflect upon the whole question, the more reason we shall see for confidently concluding that at least it cannot be explained on the principle which Hume is contented to advance. Mankind under certain circumstances, and on certain subjects, easily turn from one set of views or opinions to another; but, as was observed by Origen, they do not readily change the disposition of their minds, or their habitudes, modes, and principles of

conduct. And to suppose that a countless multitude of persons, in different parts of the world, speaking different languages and educated in different customs, should, within a single generation, have consented (for such is the historical fact) to adopt not only new modes of reasoning and believing, but of feeling and acting, from the mere report of events said to have happened at their very door, which events, however, they had never taken the trouble to examine, and which they had no motive for believing, except that they were apparently very wonderful and unlikely: this, I think, the reader will agree, does seem to be as improbable an explanation of the rise and progress of Christianity among mankind as can well be conceived. In truth, I do not see that the discussion need be farther pursued on either side. If we are allowed to believe, on the authority of a man like Hume, that a denial of Divine revelation involves such a supposition as *this*, its friends, I think, may safely let the controversy rest.<sup>1</sup>

Let it be remembered that the facts related in the New Testament are not transactions said to have happened in the moon, or in a dream, or at the siege of Troy. It was a story easy to be verified, by those who deemed it worth inquiry, on the testimony of enemies as well as friends; it occurred on the threshold of the generation in which Pliny, and Justin, and Tacitus, and Josephus lived; was endorsed with the names of persons and places known to every one;

Hence the improbability of Hume's theory; for these changes were not wrought in a dream.

<sup>1</sup> As though the rise of a "religion" as distinct from the transient phenomenon of some fanatical sect, were a fact of frequent enough occurrence to afford matter for a generalization, and that not in case of barbarous races, but of peoples producing "wise and learned" men. Of revelations proper, none are known but one, or, with Mosaism, two, but both one and the same series.—ED.

pinned down by dates and a minute specification of circumstances. The facts were in the highest degree extraordinary, if true; and even if untrue, the case becomes hardly less extraordinary, owing to the effects which the mere persuasion of their truth produced upon the public mind; emptying the temples of the gods, as Pliny informs Trajan, and putting an end to the sacrifices offered to them even in the remote provinces of the Roman empire. Every thing invited, therefore, to discussion and to critical inquiry; and the more so because no learning or research was necessary: the old had only to remember what they had seen or been told by eye-witnesses, and the young to listen while the same was related to them by the old.

En-  
thusiasms  
in that  
kind,  
says Hume,  
are disre-  
garded by  
the wise.

This may,  
or may not  
be so, but

Hume tells us indeed that in “the infancy of new religions, the wise and learned commonly esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve attention or regard.” I need not stop to inquire whether this may or may not be true as a general proposition—though there has never been but one revelation proper,—but it is not *necessarily* true in any case, and what we have to examine is, whether the contrary may not have been the case in the instance of Christianity. This is a sort of question easy to assume on either side; but, speaking of ages that are past, difficult on either side to demonstrate. There is however a passage preserved by Eusebius, from a writing by one who is believed to have been a hearer of St. John, which by no means bears out Hume’s supposition. I may mention that there can be no question about the authenticity of the extract, because it is quoted, for different purposes, by Irenæus as well as Eusebius. The words of Papias, so far as



they go, do not at all support the idea of the first disciples having taken up their belief on hearsay or without inquiry. "I shall not think it a useless trouble," says this early witness, "to set down what I clearly learned from the elders and well remember; my own interpretations also confirming what I learnt from them. For I have never taken delight, as most men do, in those who talk a great deal, but in those who speak the truth; nor in those who repeated to me useless precepts, but in them who repeated to us the sayings which the Lord had entrusted to the keeping of His followers, and which had been handed down to us from the truth itself. And if at any time I met with one who had conversed with the elders, I inquired about what they said; what Thomas, or James, or Matthew, or John, or any other of the disciples of the Lord; what Aristion or John the Presbyter, disciples of the Lord, used to teach; for I was of opinion that I could not profit so much by books as by the living."

From what has now been said, we have, I think, a right to assert as a thing *proved*, that the narrative contained in the New Testament was credited from the beginning, by those living on the spot at the time when the events are said to have taken place. That the account now in our possession was written by *living* witnesses of what was believed *generally*, and *not* asserted by the immediate *followers* of Jesus alone, has been shown to be as certain as any *historical* proposition can be. Under these circumstances it may I think justly be contended, that this is not a proposition which an honest disputant is at liberty to deny. He may, possibly, by reason of speculative difficulties, refuse to admit the *Divine* authorship or intention of the facts related by the

with the  
disciples  
was not  
the case.

It is there-  
fore  
proved,  
that the  
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facts were  
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spot; and  
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Gospels  
(so called)  
written  
down by  
living  
witnesses  
to the  
general  
belief.

Evangelists, but (bearing in mind the remarks which were made in a former chapter on the true definition of an historical fact) he cannot, as it seems to me, without a violation of logical fairness, reject the proofs which have been adduced of the things having really *happened*, that is, in other words, of their having been *believed by those who lived at the time, and on the spot*.

#### HUME.

Writing when he did, the author deals naturally with Hume as with the great English writers in general, who, indeed, have been far from over-passed, except in the invention, often happy, of general views. But, in this province Hume still *familiar ducit*. It was a sophism of this acute and half-amused man of the world, that, strange to say, put in motion the great and serious intellect of Kant, and effectually bewildered the opening mind of Germany. Clever thinkers, too, are still found to stand on this side of his *πρώτον ψεύδος*, while to some savants—the sight lost and blunted in the scrutiny of that matter which Plato or even Archimedes hardly deigned to recognize—the inevitable notion ‘cause’ would seem a sort of ‘fifth’ proposition; heads deserving of better employment were and are at a loss, because unable to get within or *behind* the notion ‘cause’ or its congener ‘necessity;’ unable, that is, to lift themselves, or behold the back of their own intelligent heads. But for all intelligible reasoning, the Patriarch of Science and even of Physics ruled long ago that at some point the *human* mind must needs stop short, *ἀνάγκη στήναι*. ‘Sophism,’ in my dictionary, is “That incomplete aspect of truth in any case, which at first sight looks like truth, but which on inspection is found to involve some radical error.—ED.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CREDIBILITY OF THE FACTS RELATED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Value of the Old Testament as an historical record—Genuineness and authenticity of the Old Testament—Proof of genuineness and authenticity—The Old Testament not a literary forgery—Narrative, why antecedently probable—Illustration of foregoing remarks—Internal marks of genuineness—Belief in the New Testament independent of the narrative part of the Old.

HAVING made the foregoing remarks, with a view to explain the evidence by which the authenticity or credibility of the matter of New Testament is proved ; before bringing this part of the subject to a close, I shall briefly advert to the *kind* of reasoning by which the general credibility of the *facts* contained in the ancient books of *Moses* is to be shown.

There is no work whose loss would cause a wider chasm in our historical knowledge than the five first books of the Old Testament. But for them we should be without so much as even a *tradition* respecting the early history of mankind. Of the value of these books as a mere literary document, it may be sufficient to observe, that the language in which they are written had ceased to be a spoken language, before any other history now extant was composed ; and that the facts which they record are exactly those about which our human curiosity would be most alive, supposing we had no information concerning our primæval ancestors,

Penta-  
teuch.  
Credibility  
of its con-  
tents.

Invaluable  
as ancient  
history.

beyond what has been preserved in the broken and for the most part fabulous traditions which we find in the ancient poets of Greece.

But its genuineness and authenticity drawn from *internal* evidence only.

But if we apply to the books of Moses the same tests of genuineness and authenticity as have been applied to the books of the New Testament, or such as we should employ in discussing the credibility of any work on profane history, our proofs immediately fail us. For in the Pentateuch all evidence from *without* of the reality of the events, or of the identity of the author, is wanting: it is from *internal* marks alone that any argument can be drawn; but these are of a kind such as no other history, ancient or modern, can offer. Of the extraordinary character of the facts related in these books I shall shortly speak; but putting this objection aside, and looking only to style and manner, there are no writings of antiquity, nor even those of Homer himself, more strongly stamped with the marks of genuineness.

Literary fabrications belong to other societies than any before B.C. 500.

Many works no doubt of apocryphal parentage have come down to us; but literary fabrications belong to a different state of society, from that which we may suppose to have existed at Babylon or Jerusalem 600 years before Christ. But omitting this, it may be safely said that, if there be in the world a history free from every suspicion of imposture, as arising out of any perceptible design, it is that of Israel. Abounding as it does beyond all others in wonders and apparent improbabilities, and in subjects fitted to feed that spirit of national vaunting which seems inherent in human nature, yet, when such events are recorded in the Old Testament, that seems to be done without any end that we can assign, except the ungracious purpose of placing the wickedness of the

Nor does the Old Testament show any

nation in the most conspicuous light. In the victories of the Jews no mention is ever made of the prowess of the soldiers, or the skill of the commander ; in their defeats it is never attempted to extenuate the disgrace. From the beginning to the end of the Hebrew Scriptures I do not recollect a word which can be construed as the language of national vanity ; while there is hardly a chapter in which some passage is not to be found humiliating to this feeling. A more hard-featured and unflattering portraiture than that which the Jewish people have preserved of themselves, has never been drawn of itself by any nation.

In the view, however, to which we are at present directing our attention, the question is not by whom was the Pentateuch written ? Whether it was written by Moses himself, or by some other under his direction, or by a person living in a more recent age, are questions which it is now, from the nature of things, impossible for us to determine on the customary principles of examination. In the present inquiry, however, as in that relating to the Gospels, it is not the *name* of the person by whom the history was *written* which is all-important, but whether these overwhelming events related in it did really happen ; that is, were they *believed* from the very beginning by the whole people under whose eyes they are described as having taken place ? The miracles recorded in the books of Moses were certainly not done in a corner, but must have been *witnessed* by hundreds of thousands, if they were really performed. There was nothing ambiguous about them ; they admitted of no qualified belief. That which we read could be the working of no subordinate agent ; it was the immediate operation of Divine omnipotence, or the

national  
motive for  
fiction.

But, omit-  
ting ques-  
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authorship  
or date,

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and, if  
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happened.

whole story was a simple fabrication. But if this last supposition cannot, in the circumstances, be maintained; if the facts of the case be such as to exclude every hypothesis which can be made to account for them, except the supposition of their having been believed by the innumerable multitude of persons who are represented as having been eye-witnesses of all that we are told:—in that case the supposition of their not having after all really *happened* appears to me quite impossible. Again, even if the multitude who travelled with Moses in the wilderness did all *believe* the minuter facts that their shoes never wore out, that their garments never waxed old for forty years, that their feet never swelled in all that time, and that they were fed daily with manna, which was provided for them by an unseen hand:—if, I say, no more could be *demonstrated* than that all this was, at any rate, *believed* by those by whom it is said to have been experienced, it must have been a *fact*. Wonderful and impossible as the story may seem to be, nothing would be so wonderful and impossible as that with such effects left on their minds, it should not really have happened at all. How such seeming wonders were to be *explained*; whether it was the God of their fathers, or some god of the nations, who was their author—and, on the former supposition, whether the object of them was to proclaim the Decalogue, or sanction the authority of the laws promulgated by Moses, or whether resort was to be had to any other solution of the case, would not matter—all these were but questions of opinion which might well have been debated, at the *time*, among the followers of Moses. But if the history be *authentic*, that is if it was *believed* by those who were eye-witnesses of what it

relates, it seems to me impossible to frame an hypothesis by which such belief can be explained, except the supposition of the facts having really taken place.

In like manner let us take the case of the Egyptians, as related in the same history. If *they* believed in the occurrence of all the evils which are described as having fallen upon them: the plague of flies and locusts and hail, the murrain of beasts, the death of their first-born: these facts were not of a kind to allow the supposition of a mistake. Either in the main they really happened, or the history in which they are related is not an authentic history, but must have been the invention of a later age. It could not have been composed at the time, or if composed, it would not then have been believed. Persons in the present day may not assent to the pretensions of Moses to a Divine legation, and may *account for* the facts as they see best; but if they were believed by the Egyptians to whom they happened, and by all Israel before whom they happened; that is to say, by those who were *eye-witnesses* of the immense events, and who certainly *could* not have believed them, if they were but the inventions of a *subsequent* age—in that case, be the writer of the book of Exodus who he may, the events which are there related must have been real. If they were *not*, the whole history from beginning to end must have been not only an invention, but an invention many ages posterior to the assigned date of the transactions, and as it would not have been floated at all, still less have revolutionized the morals and manners of a race.

For the events were not local, or incidental only to a few individuals, but concerned the people at large, whether Jews or Egyptians, and were of a kind not

So, too,  
with the  
Egyptians;

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facts, if  
real, could  
never have

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forgotten ;

to be quickly forgotten. If they really happened, the memory of them would not have been effaced in one, nor in two, nor in three generations ; and if they did not really happen, there must still have been a *point* of time when the belief of their having happened had its first beginning. Now, what were the circumstances which gave rise to this supposed popular delusion, or on what theory of historical probability can we show such a delusion to have been possible ?

and, as has  
been said,  
if believed  
at all, must  
have taken  
place.

Now the *present* belief of their truth, on the part of the Jews, is not a question which is open to dispute. Whether the same has *always* been the belief of their nation, is no doubt the point to be first examined ; but *this* does not involve any philosophical question ; it is simply an historical inquiry into a matter of fact. If from such an inquiry, it should appear to be certain that the belief in question has *always* been entertained by the Jews, and so must have been the conviction of the whole nation when in the wilderness itself : in that case, I repeat, that, be the *philosophical* explanation of the phenomenon ever so difficult, the facts themselves *must have really taken place*. Assuming the absolute certainty in the main of the events, as related in the Mosaic history, the *belief of those then present* is the only *proof* on which this certainty can ultimately rest. Even if it were the history of events occurring within the memory of persons now alive, the testimony of eye-witnesses would be the sole evidence on which any conclusion could be established. Whether the facts be supposed to have happened six years, or six thousand years ago, makes no difference as to this point ; the question we have to examine will still be the same, namely, what was the BELIEF of those who lived at the time and on the spot, when and

where the scenes shall be described as having been transacted.

Now it may seem to be a paradox but it is this same miraculous character of the Mosaic history is one main evidence of its truth. For under such conditions, the natural improbability of the events does not weaken, but, on the contrary, strengthens the reasoning by which our belief in its *authenticity* is supported.

And here, far from a difficulty, the extraordinary is the main evidence ;

If the facts contained in this history did not really happen, how are we to account for the origin of the political and religious institutions of Israel? Looking to this question, it becomes very difficult to imagine a state of things, at any *lower period*, in which the whole people should have been brought even to believe so many improbable fictions ; but that they should also have been persuaded, so long after the events, to change their manners and customs, and ways of life, and modes of worship, and to adopt an entirely new code of laws with respect to every one of these particulars, in consequence of their sudden belief in facts, then and there for the first time heard of, and which were not pretended to have been wrought among themselves, or in their *own* days, but among their remote ancestors many hundred years back :—this is quite incomprehensible.

for, if none such occurred, how account for the *formation* of Israel ?

It would be an extraordinary social phenomenon on any hypothesis, even if the laws imposed upon the nation had been mild and easy, for the many cleave to existing custom as such ; but these laws are quite of an opposite character. They are not, like those we are accustomed to read of among other nations, framed only with a view to the general welfare, and intended merely to regulate the conduct of individuals

A phenomenon extraordinary, even had the laws been easy, and not repulsive.

in their intercourse with each other, as members of a body politic. They are not few and simple, shortly learned and easily explained ; but, according to the statements of Jewish writers, they amount to more than 600 precepts, of which the greater part do not affect the interests of the community at large, have no relation to mutual rights, but are strictly personal sacrifices ; some of them as irksome as if they had been meant to be penal, and always spoken of as a yoke, while a large proportion of the remainder admit of no explanation on any ground of civil expediency, and can by no possibility have been received as natural duties, except on the principle of an implicit obedience due to the supposed command of some absolute and irresistible power, silencing all debate, and over-riding many of the strongest principles of human nature. No supposition of a dispensation simply *less* miraculous to *our* apprehension, would render the history of the Jews more easy of explanation, or be at all more probable in itself on any ground of metaphysical reasoning. One miracle may be more striking than another in relation to the effect upon our imagination, or it may be greater than another in reference to the supposed powers of any finite agent ; but in reference to Omnipotence, all distinctions of this kind are, of course, done away.

But if we receive the Pentateuch as, at least, an authentic account, these motives will not be so hard to stand.

Be this as it may, if we receive the Jewish Scriptures as an authentic document, merely speculative difficulties of this or any other kind are banished from the discussion. Explain the fact as we please, if the miracles ascribed to Moses were believed by his cotemporaries, however hard it may be to account for such belief, it will not then be so very hard to understand the reasons why their posterity in



after-ages submitted to the laws which he imposed, and which they found established. But if the flagrant facts, on the authority of which the laws were submitted to, neither happened nor were ever believed to have happened until many generations had passed away, in this case the conduct of Israel must have been based upon some principle of reasoning which I am quite unable to divine.

Let us put a nearly parallel case ; and for this purpose, instead of the Jewish, let us substitute the laws of the Christian code. These last are all of them confessedly seen to be agreeable to reason and to the feelings of the wiser and better part of the world, as being plainly calculated to promote the peace and happiness of every individual ; and therefore strict as they may be, and difficult to practise on some occasions, it will nevertheless be probably admitted, that it would be an easier task to persuade a nation to submit to the authority of Christ than to bend their necks to the severe yoke of the Mosaic dispensation.

But what, let me ask, would be the success of a missionary preaching among the New Zealanders, or any other heathen people, if, as an argument for obeying the precepts of the Gospel, he were to do no more than tell his hearers that the miracles recorded of Jesus had been worked in New Zealand in the time of their own forefathers ; and were even to go so far as to appeal to their own memories and consciences for the truth of what he said ?

Surely such an appeal would be thought akin to lunacy. Whatever difficulty there might be in persuading any people who had never heard of Christ to believe in the miracles ascribed to Him, this would

For, take the comparatively easy laws of the Christian code,

how would the missionary fare in New Zealand, who should propose them on the ground that Jesus had taught them centuries ago there, and even appeal to their own memories ?

not be diminished, but very greatly increased, if it was also attempted to make them believe that they had all been wrought in their own country; and, moreover, that the precepts in question, though never heard of before, were the very laws which their forefathers had handed down to them. Such, however, is precisely the hypothesis which we find in the Old Testament. Whether we take up the historical, or the prophetic, or the devotional parts of the volume, the wonders which the Creator wrought for their fathers in Egypt is the one topic always urged upon the Jews as the foundation of their duty to obey the commandments which He then gave them. But if these wonders never happened, and had never been heard of, was the nation out of its senses, or were the writers insane, that the former should have been induced to listen, or the latter have hoped to persuade, by such an argument?

But, even could we deny the facts, yet the laws remain, and the Jewish nation is itself a monument of the facts.

Supposing we were at liberty to deny, not only that the facts related in the Pentateuch had ever happened, but that the laws themselves, which we suppose to have rested upon them, had ever really been received by the Jews, the reasoning would cohere. But the testimony of all history is peremptory upon this point; or even if it were silent, the present ubiquitous existence and manners of the Jews afford a living proof, not only of the general reality of the history contained in the Old Testament, but of an attachment to the laws and institutions described in it, such as there is no example of in the history of any other people upon record,—an attachment mixed with so much of, what I will not so much call religious devotion, as superstitious dread and fear, as is singularly in keeping with what we may suppose to

have been their terrors in the wilderness. "All other nations," says Philo, writing while Jerusalem was yet standing, "that have possessed codes of laws, have changed them at times in various particulars. Wars, foreign and domestic, and other adverse circumstances, or else luxury and love of change, or even prosperity itself, have occasioned the institutions of most nations to vary with the varying condition of the people for whom they were intended. But the Jewish law," he says, "has not been changed so much as in one, not even the smallest particular, since the time of its first promulgation. It alone stands firm and unmoved, as if stamped with the signature of nature herself. And although no other people have endured so many afflictions as the Jewish, nor been exposed in an equal degree to every vicissitude of good and bad fortune, yet not one single iota (*οὐδὲν οὐδὲ τῶν μικροτέρων*) has been cancelled or annulled. Neither hunger, nor pestilence, nor wars, nor kings, nor tyrants,—neither sedition, nor any other evil, either of Divine or human infliction,—have been able to supersede the attachment of the Jewish people to the command of their fathers, or to tempt them away from the observance of it."<sup>1</sup>

In these remarks it will be observed, I have confined my argument to the mere truth of the *facts* related in the Mosaic history. Doubts have been proposed respecting the person of the writer, whether it was the work of one or of several authors; and on the former supposition, whether it was composed by Moses himself, or only with his sanction and authority; but no important conclusion depends upon the determination of these questions. That the five first books

It is, then, the miraculous alone that excites suspicion; and yet the belief and practice of the nation up to the very date, makes their truth the easier alternative.

<sup>1</sup> De Vita Mosis, lib. ii.

of the Old Testament are not fabrications, but genuine or *bonâ fide* compositions, is a matter about which there can be no question in the mind of any man of ordinary taste and knowledge. As far as language, sentiment, and other internal marks of that kind are concerned, they are the very coinage of truth itself. It is the miraculous character of the history which alone could have suggested a suspicion of its authenticity. But the belief of the whole Jewish nation in the reality of the narrative, running as it does, up to the very time when the events are described as happening, is a fact so implicated with all their feelings, opinions, and institutions, and the difficulty of supposing it to have been the invention of any after age is so great, that the alternative of its truth is the easier. So much for Mosaism.

This question, however, does not touch the New Testament at all, nor would proof of Christianity suffer, were the Pentateuch even lost.

So far, however, as the question of the authenticity of the New Testament or the belief of regular Christianity is concerned, our opinion on these points is very little, if at all, affected, by the opinion we may have formed as to the purely *narrative* parts of the Jewish Scriptures. Indeed, I do not see how it would injure any part of the rational argument on which our reception of Christ's Institution is at present, and properly founded, if the historical books of the Old Testament had not even been handed down.

For in no work on evidences is any argument drawn from *facts* of the Old Testament, though the New Testament is often

Of the truth of this, we may readily satisfy ourselves by examining any work upon the motives for believing, as urged either by the ancient apologists, or of more modern writers. In none of these do we find that any part of the argument is drawn from the *facts* contained in the books of Moses. Allusion is often made to the New Testament as confirming the Divine authority of the ancient one; but I do not remember

that any writer has adduced the *wonders* which God wrought by the hand of Moses, in direct proof of the miracles ascribed to Jesus. It is the adversary of Christianity who commonly recurs to the Old Testament, for that is the side on which he deems the *proof* of Divine revelation to be weakest. This may perhaps be *now* the case, but if so, it would only show that the authority of the Jewish dispensation does not stand upon so *broad* a ground of Evidence as that by which the Christian revelation—the ultimate reason for which the law itself was given—is supported. It must necessarily be more easy for *moderns* at this time, to demonstrate the facts on which the faith of the Gospel is built, than those on which we rest our belief of the far remoter Mosaic Institution. And since the Gospel facts might easily be certain, even though we supposed the evidence of the latter to have become dim through the lapse of time,—the two dispensations, so far as mere *historical* evidence is concerned, ought to be considered apart, and not as being one and the same question: in short, as Paley says, “we need not make Christianity answer with its life, for every fact recorded in the Old Testament.” Our Saviour often draws His examples and illustrations from the Jewish Scriptures, but it is only to the “Law and the Prophets,” as that, He refers, “they that testify of *Him*.” Accordingly there is no reason why His followers should not confine their argument within the same limitation, and connect the proof of Christianity with those parts only of the Old Testament, which are not open to dispute, but which rest upon evidence of a kind, such as (unless I am mistaken) will appear to be much less open to debate and controversy than can be affirmed of simply historical



facts ; for the hypothesis of a properly Divine or providential guidance of the writers, is a motive, however true, which cannot be proposed as conclusive for the presumed outsider, or for any that place themselves outside ; this is in the last resort a family question among believers—a doctrine of the household—*quod fideles norunt*.

#### NOTE.

Some light may be thrown on the more domestic estimate of the grounds of Mosaism, and of the arguments to be expected from Hebrews competent in the matter, by the representation of so unexceptionable a witness for his cotemporary religionaries as the candid Orobio. Isaac Orobio, the most eminent Jewish savant and philosopher of his day—I do not forget Spinoza, with whom he was in dispute, a Jew by blood alone—came from Spain to Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. He was an interesting person, fortified withal with the general culture of his age. At this great asylum he met with Limborch, the eminent Protestant professor, who invited him to discussion on the grounds of *talis quum sis utinam noster esses*. “An Israelite so pious and intelligent,” said Limborch to him, “cannot but acknowledge Jesus for the Messiah.” This was the point of departure, the Pentateuch being supposed admitted, but, as usual, there were digressions into collateral issues. Orobio’s papers were afterwards published by Limborch, with his replies in a small quarto, 1678. In these, as might be expected, the advantage was greatly with Limborch on the main subject, but some points presented to the excellent pastor, though neglected by him, seem yet sufficiently relevant to the topics of this chapter to be worth mentioning, as pointing to the state of mind as it might exist of old in Palestine. For Orobio may be taken as a fair representative of the well-conditioned Israelitish mind, such as might have obtained in Gamaliel, or sundry synagogues at our era.

Summoned thus to quit Mosaism for Jesus as the true Messiah of the Prophets, Orobio meets this with an explicit denial of any obligation to be found in the *Law*—and “the *Law*,” says Orobio, “is our only *authority*”—to believe in any Messiah at all. Never, to these days, says Orobio, has Israel recognized the duty of any article of faith or practice outside the “*Law*,” and the one article of faith or *dogma* in our Law is the unity of God. True, the Prophets—a secondary authority—especially Daniel, do speak of a Messiah, but this is a promise, and no more. The terms, indeed, are obscure, and have never yet been fulfilled, but no doubt we shall believe Him when He

does come, as we now believe the sun. We Jews have seen, however, no signs of His appearance corresponding with the magnificent language of the Prophets, and so, at any rate, we are in innocent or incurable ignorance.

Limborch rejoins, "If you decline to receive the surer testimony of the Gospels to the much more wonderful life of Jesus, on what grounds do the Jews themselves receive their own Pentateuch, which has so much less evidence to show for itself?" "That is not our case," replies Orobio. "You indeed believe the Divine mission of Jesus on the sole authority of the four Gospels, and I do not say that this may not suffice to confirm a Christian born, or even to move a pure heathen to join you, but not to move the Jew who has been severely forbidden by the Law, as received from his forefathers, ever to recede from it. Added to which, our own system rests on a much surer basis than books. The faith of Israel is not built upon the *book* of the Pentateuch at all, however venerable, but upon notorious miracles worked visibly by Moses in the sight of myriads, in Egypt, in the Red Sea, in the Desert—nay, more, on the direct manifestation and attestation of His personal existence by the Creator Himself on Sinai.

"All this was not at the first known to us from any writing but was seen and heard, to their astonishment, by countless numbers of men, women, and children all at once, and it has been propagated in every one of our families, from father to son, with unbroken continuity, unto this hour. Now, whatever be the case with the life of Jesus, as given in your four books, you have nothing to show in the way of miracles equal in splendour of display to those. Numerous, most interesting, and even necessary *particulars*, indeed, of this explosion of wonders, personal incidents, speeches, have been rescued by the writer of the Pentateuch from otherwise inevitable perversion or oblivion; but this universal witness of our nation, to the legation of Moses, and indeed its very formation into a people at all, were never derived from those ancient pages, but from the necessary and imperative visibility of facts admitted by yourselves as well—transmitted *vivâ voce* to their children. This was why, while the rest of humanity was sunk in a depraved Polytheism, and while a few *litterati* did perhaps reach the *notion*, but never dreamed of founding the popular *worship* of One spiritual Power—every vine-dresser in Palestine, and every poor man among us, was just as sure of his personal relation to the Supreme Creator as was the first magnate or Rabbi in Israel. For the true basis for both his and our convictions was no other."

Much to the same purpose might of course have been said for the Apostolic Institution also. Limborch, nevertheless, does not advert to the point here made with so much force in favour of the positive Mosaic revelation, and I am only noting points

characteristic of the position from which instructed Hebrews viewed the testimony of the Old Testament.

He then shifts the ground, and urges, "You, my friend, disparage by comparison our New Testament, but how could you propose or defend your *own Law* to a *heathen* as our missionaries do the Gospels, and often with much success?" To this Orobio replies, "I do not profess to be able to *demonstrate* my law to a mere Gentile or pure unbeliever at all, for to be a subject for conversion to Israel, a person must first be at least a Deist." "But your question is quite out of order; for, remember, we were disputing on the one basis of the Mosaic mission, which *you*, too, have admitted. However, were a Gentile to suggest to myself, as I have just done in case of your Gospels, that in imposing his belief on Israel for his own ambitious ends, Moses had, indeed, showed himself *sagacissimum hominem*, but was yet, by no means, on that account, to be a Prophet from *God*—what motives, you ask, could I as a Jew offer better than those furnished by the Gospels to Christ?"

On this we have from Orobio a remarkable admission. "I do not myself see any way," says he, "to *demonstrate* the Divine legation of Moses to a mere heathen, for that is not matter of scientific shewing, just as the existence of God Himself—our only article of *faith*—is not a thesis to be *demonstrated*, for to demonstrate is to prove a thing from its *cause*, whereas the Almighty has no cause, and so His existence cannot be shown *à priori*, but at the best, only *à posteriori*, from His effects or works. Now, since all the Gentile philosophers—let alone Aristotle—hold the universe itself to be infinite" (*in-finitum*, here in sense of Spinoza, or possibly *l'Infini* of Descartes), "may I ask how you, Limborch, would yourself *demonstrate* the true God to such pure Pagan? Should, then, a heathen disputant deny the *Divine* legation of Moses, he is shown, by the very fact, to be *Atheus*, *quia non habet aliunde quo Dei existentiam certissime et indubitanter credat, quamvis ex aliis principiis possit probabiliter conjectari*." The position is that, through proof, scientific, or from absolute premise, be not attainable, the knowledge of the Jew rests upon still firmer basis, being *suo modo*, intuitive. Israel, as Philo so often repeats, *gens cutemplativa*, *Populus videns Deum*.

"Your question, then," says Orobio, "is an idle one, for there can be no regular dispute on such point, with any but with a Christian by whom the Divine legation of Moses is taken as fact; for, as I said, our national belief rests avowedly, and your own ultimately, on the Divine *visibility* at Sinai."

From these positions of the Jew, however, who had professed philosophy at Salamanca, and from other expressions, we should have a corollary not undeserving of attention—namely, that, whereas up to the days of Cicero—the Theist, *par excellence*—

the position of Theism was the only good and creditable, if not a demonstrable, position; that of mere independent or negative Theism is, at this day, one scarcely tenable in the *school*, at least in presence of the great and obtrusive monument of positive Christianity. For, since that mental attitude towards the superior order named Theism assigns to a Creator the *continuous control*, in some sort, of the physical cosmos, and, still more, of its intelligent occupants; much less can the consistent Theist exclude from Him the care of those great and obtrusively operative societies that have formed, as it were, the very *trunk line* of His creatures or race. Would it be compatible with such reflections, to conceive that evolutions or what not, subversive at moments indeed of even cosmical arrangement, but continuously disposing withal, or even absorbing all human minds and wills (such regimens, that is, as Moses and Christ had succeeded in establishing), could, without cognizance of the Creator and of themselves alone, have come to occupy or usurp the vast scene of their operation, and there to *develop*, whether consciously, or, possibly, even fortuitously, as may seem to any one the more philosophical alternative? Where is the place for the Divine at all, if not here? What is a Deity from whom the reins have fallen? Yet these last still remain, as must be evident, the most eventful facts in all terrestrial annals; and, whether accounted for or not, would seem about the only things worth accounting for. The reason, uniformly given for their *own* being and vocation by Israel was in that state of the world the very intelligible one, namely, *that men should come to say, Verily, there does exist a God, truly there is a Judge that disposes of the earth.*

This view, at least, does not *add* to any difficulty inherent in such matter. And so the mere facts of the invasion and irrepressible settlement upon the globe, and on the face of human society, of such continuous, organized centres of energetic operation as was Mosaism, and, as now, is regular Christendom, would seem to conclude in the same sense, so far as these are phenomena of obvious history; whereas the most ambitious and speculative negations of the *Divine* hand do no more than leave the last where they were, as at least irremoveable facts.

Their whole significance, then, might seem such that even independent Theism, still less Atheism or Pantheism (for Agnosticism is no conclusion) are inferences scarcely permissible to minds open to serious reflection, however little such may see their way back to any positive settlement or seat for their wills.

Upon the subject of the Books of Moses themselves and their composition, the reader may refer with much profit to Professor Smith's excellent work on the "Credibility of the Pentateuch," Longmans, 1868.—ED.

## CHAPTER IX.

### EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY AS DEDUCIBLE FROM FULFILLED PROPHECY.

Divine origin of Christianity a question not of fact but of opinion—Rapid rise of, predicted in the Old Testament—Effect of this proof among the early Christians—Force of the same at the present time—Preceding remarks illustrated—Meaning of Prophecy, how to be determined—Prophecy not an ancillary argument—Present proof from Prophecy not available to the Apostles—Proof from Prophecy independent of the proof from miracles.

Miracles  
viewed so  
far, as pure  
*facts*  
proved by  
witnesses.

IN the preceding remarks, I have confined myself to the evidence on which a belief of the events related in the New Testament is founded, considering those events simply as historical facts, and without regard to the supernatural agency by which we suppose them to have been brought about. This last, as not falling under sense, was stated to be a matter which could not be decided on the evidence of human testimony. It is the conviction of all Christians that this agency was Divine, but the proof of such proposition cannot, as I just now said, be determined on the testimony of *witnesses*. This is a question, not of fact, or inference only, but must be demonstrated as all other matters of opinion require to be, by circumstantial reasoning of some kind. In my introductory remarks, I endeavoured to explain the argument upon which this opinion now rests, and I must here be permitted to remind the reader of what I then stated.

Not as to  
*cause*,  
which is  
provable  
by reason  
alone.



At the time when the Apostles lived, nothing, as I have said, could be, humanly speaking, more improbable than that the event, which they proclaimed to be at hand, should have come to pass. The Gospel was then a mere speck in the horizon. That within the lapse of a single generation it should have spread itself beyond the limits of the Roman Empire, and the name of its founder have become familiar to every people and in every language of the known world :—though an historical fact not to be disputed, presents a problem which neither the miracles of the New Testament, nor any thing which we read in the Old, would seem sufficient to explain without the supposition of the continued co-operation of the Supreme Ruler of the universe.

Abstracted from the prevalent opinion of a Divine intention, there was not when Christianity first appeared a single point on which the hope of its success could have been built. All anticipations from reason and experience, all calculations of policy were opposed to such an expectation. The passions of mankind, their prejudices, their interests, were all adverse to its reception. Every constituted authority, every conventional influence, whether of power, or learning, or rank, or wealth, were arrayed on the side of its adversaries :—and yet it spread with a rapidity and uninterrupted uniformity of progress, which is not surprising in our eyes alone, who look back upon the event, but was the subject of amazement to those who were witnesses of the phenomenon.

It is adverted to by Justin Martyr, as if he were describing a stream whose course flowed upwards, or a vessel which sailed on the waters with outspread canvas, against wind and tide and every countervailing

Nothing, at the time, less likely than a new faith,

without previous knowledge at least of the Divine intention.

to be shown from Old Testament alone. Justin Martyr.

So Tertul-  
lian, also,

force. Mysterious in itself, a miraculous character was given to it from the language of the Old Testament. *Quidquid agitur*, says Tertullian, speaking of the prophecies to the heathen, and pointing their attention to the visible signs of their fulfilment, then passing before their own eyes: *quidquid agitur, præ-nunciabatur; quidquid videtur, audiebatur: dum patimur leguntur, dum recognoscimus probantur*: and this he proceeds to say is a pledge that all human opposition will be in vain, its ultimate triumph was decreed by God: *hinc apud nos futurorum quoque tuta fides est, jam scilicet probatorum; quia cum illis quæ quotidie probantur prædicebantur, Eædem voces sonant; eædem literæ notant; idem spiritus pulsat.* Adv. Gentes, cap. xx.

pointed to  
fulfilment  
in actual  
operation;

Tertullian was writing at a time when mankind was in a transition state between polytheism and the Gospel; and when the progress of the last had been already so great as to justify him in asserting that the predictions of the Old Testament were actually fulfilling. And he appeals to this argument in preference to all others. Passing over the facts on which we now place our proof,—passing over those, moreover, on which the Apostles placed the argument,—he bids his Gentile countrymen mark the rapidity with which the name of Christ was spreading; and then compare what they themselves were witnessing with the language of the Jewish prophecies concerning the future glories of his kingdom. That which in the days of the Apostles was but as a subject of assertions, which it remained for time to verify, had already become the more substantive part of the evidences of the Gospel. Tertullian does not argue as the Apostles were content to do, that God was *about* to establish a new command-

ment because Jesus was the Messiah whom the prophets had foretold, but he proves Christ to have been the Messiah because the commandment which he delivered was even then in full operation, and already included a countless multitude of followers.

I need hardly observe, that if this argument was a legitimate proof of the Divine authority of the Gospel in the days of Tertullian, when the controversy between it and Polytheism might perhaps have been considered as yet in suspense, and before the predominance of the former was a completed fact, it should be still more conclusive in the present day, when the controversy is at an end, and the victory achieved. If the mere threat of an approaching victory over superstition and idolatry was a sufficient reason for asserting the Divine authority of Christ, independently of all other proof except that which was being furnished daily by the fulfilment of prophecy; it would seem that the same evidence should increase to certainty, now that the definite establishment of the Christian Institutions is no longer a matter of probability, but a consummated fact.

Tertullian does not say that the rapid progress which Christianity had made, and was still making, at the time when he wrote, proved it to be Divine; nor that its final triumph would by itself, and abstractedly from any concurring considerations, be a sufficient evidence to demonstrate its truth. The mere *success* would be no better evidence of its Divine origin, than the establishment of the religion of Mohammed, considered, as a success, and *no more*, would be a proof of its having come from God. But viewing the progress of Christianity in connexion with the marvellous life of the Founder, as related in the

whereas,  
for *us*, it is  
a com-  
pleted *fact*.

Its  
divinity,  
however, is  
not proved  
by mere  
success  
apart from  
antecedent  
prophe-  
cies.

New Testament, and with the antecedent prophecies authenticating both Jesus and the course of His kingdom, Tertullian's reasoning was just and solid ; and I must repeat, that if the argument was legitimate in his time, when the final event was yet in suspense, it may justly be considered as something more than merely legitimate, now that the fortunes of Christianity have ceased to be a matter of debate ; and when there is no controversy at least about its temporal success.

The weight of this reasoning, though upheld by the foregoing passage of so great a writer, does not, however, require the support of authority ; it rests upon general principles, and not upon a supposition of the particular case of Christianity.

Con-  
trasted,  
in this  
respect  
with  
Islam.

For example, it is always understood that neither Mohammed himself, nor his followers, alleged, or pretended to allege, any logical proof of a Divine authority. The successful dissemination of the Koran, taken alone and abstractedly from all miraculous testimony, is not entitled to serious consideration, although it has sometimes been brought forward as a set-off against the weight attached to a similar fact, in stating the evidences of Christianity. But instead of discussing the differences between the two cases, let us, for the sake of argument, assume a perfect similarity.

The establishment, however, if it may be so called, of Moslemism in the world, is as undisputed a fact as that of the Gospel ; but it does not, like the last, lay claim to any proofs of a miraculous origin ; or to any support from ancient prophecies ; or to a preparatory dispensation of any kind. But let us now supply this fundamental defect in the title of its founder ;

assimilate his claims to those on which the Divine authority of Christ is founded ; assume, for example, the existence of supposed sacred documents reaching back to a remote antiquity, such as those contained in the volume of the Jewish Scriptures ; let there be found in them the same apparent marks of Divine inspiration, as we find in Holy Writ ; and this too combined with the announcement of a future revelation, in which all the leading features of the Mohammedan creed had been set forth ; let the distinctive character of the messenger of this promised covenant be portrayed ; the time of his appearing signified ; the name of his birth-place designated ; the fortunes of his successors and the triumphs of their arms stated, with other particulars, such as no mere sagacity could have foreseen :—if all this should have proved undeniably in conformity with the after event ;—in this case I ask, if there be any one, when reflecting upon such prophecies, and comparing them with what had come to pass, who would disallow such a proof of the Divine mission of its founder, or would treat the belief of it as mere vulgar superstition ? For my part, I much question whether the confidence of the least credulous philosopher, would not in such a case be shaken !

In the particular case of the Koran, its religion enjoins precepts so contrary to a sound morality, and the life of Mohammed was stained with so many actions inconsistent with the high character which he claimed, that on the hypothesis which I have just now been supposing, we might rather be driven to the belief of a Manichæan principle in the government of the universe ; but if we correct this part of the hypothesis, by omitting all precepts and doctrines at variance with natural religion, the case which we



have been assuming will clearly be placed upon the legitimate basis of an asserted Divine revelation.

Let us, then, assimilate the proofs of Christianity to the hypothesis here proposed, by omitting all reference to the testimony of the Apostles and other personal disciples of Christ, and resting our conclusion altogether on the evidence of the Old Testament.

We have had occasion to explain at some length the manner in which the *establishment* of the Gospel has operated and reacts upon the persuasion of the *miraculousness* of the events related in the New Testament; it is now my intention to show what is the effect of this same fact, of the settlement of the Gospel kingdom, upon the evidence to prove the Inspiration of the *Old Testament*.

For, sup-  
posing  
New  
Testament  
lost, the  
fact re-  
mains that  
Christians  
have ever  
held its  
main  
positions :

Let us, then, suppose ourselves in ignorance of every particular connected with the first rise of the Christian Institutions—that the writings of the Apostles had been lost, and with them the history of their doings; in short, that neither the New Testament, nor any knowledge of its specific contents, had survived to the present time. On this supposition we should, of course, have been ignorant of many precious words of Christ, of the places where His miracles were performed, of all the interesting circumstances with which they were accompanied, and of various other important particulars, of much of the matter of what goes to make up theology; but we might, perhaps, still know a good deal in a general way concerning these points from monumental rites obtaining from the very beginning, and from other cotemporary sources of tradition. Let us, however, put the case, that no authentic account of any kind, either sacred or profane, had come down to us; that there was a hiatus at this place,

in our memorial of events—a page torn out, rendering this part of ancient history an entire blank. Such a supposition would indeed set aside all the help men derive from their imaginations, and reduce our faith in Christianity to little more than a dry belief in certain general propositions; but we are not therefore to conclude that we should be without the means of forming an opinion as to its Divine authority.

For omitting all question about the historical truth of the events, there is no doubt that, whether truly or falsely, Christians do in fact *believe* the founder of their religion to have been born in Judæa, at Bethlehem; of the seed of Abraham, and tribe of Judah; of the lineage of Jesse, and family of David; that He was the son of a reputed virgin; that He was preceded by another prophet, who was His forerunner; that He lived a life of poverty; that He worked various miracles; that He was put to an ignominious death; that He rose again from the grave, and ascended into heaven; that His death was a propitiation for the sins of mankind; and that He is now seated at the right hand of God, all power and dominion over His Church being committed to His hands; that He is the object of Divine worship in every nation which calls itself by His name. Moreover, it is the belief of all the Christian world that He appeared upon earth during the standing of the second temple, a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem, and about 500 years after the termination of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. I do not *now* claim these things as true; but the BELIEF of their truth is certain, for the question before us is, at what date did this notorious belief of ours first commence, and how did it come to obtain so universal an assent?

that is, all  
the articles  
of the  
Creed,

as we  
know from  
outside  
sources,  
also.  
Justin  
Martyr.

For an answer to these inquiries, we turn back to civil history. As we are now supposing all cotemporary documents, from A.D. 1—70, to have been lost, let us examine the writings of Justin Martyr, which were composed probably about fifty years after the taking of Jerusalem. From his testimony we learn (what indeed we know from other sources) that an immense multitude of persons, in almost every province of the Roman Empire, and even beyond its limits, had professed, at the time when he was writing, the identical creed, as to every several particular just now mentioned, which mankind entertain at the present day.

But when  
and how  
did it  
begin?

We go back some eighty years or less before the time of Justin—about the year of Rome 750—and we observe that the whole of the known world was at *that* time either Heathen or Jewish: that not so much as the name of a Christian had been ever heard of. But yet in the short interval between these two periods, we find, on Heathen as well as Christian testimony, that the temple of Jerusalem no longer exists; that the Jewish ritual has been abolished; that the city has been destroyed; that the nation has been dispersed;—and that in the meanwhile, a religion asserted by mankind to have had its beginning in Judæa has risen upon the ruins of the Jewish, during the intervening period, and spread itself among all classes and ranks of men in every quarter of the world.

The rise  
of the  
faith is, in  
any case,  
matter of  
philosophical  
interest.

Viewing the infancy of Christianity thus nakedly and divested of all details, the outline is sufficiently extraordinary; and if nothing more were known of it in an historical point of view, yet as a mere philosophical and political question, it would deserve no common

attention. The curiosity of every thinking man would be excited to the desire of learning further particulars about it. What manner of person, it would be asked, was the founder of this supposed revelation understood to have been? By what arguments or motives had He been able to persuade so many thousands of persons to renounce the persuasions in which they had been born: and to embrace in their stead a system of belief so contrary to all their previous ways of thinking? What had He said, or what had He done, by which we might account for the phenomenon?

Now, in the absence of all more direct testimony in answer to these questions, and taking into consideration the extraordinary facts of the case, it certainly would not excite our surprise to be told, as we are by Justin and others, that the Founder was supposed by his followers to have been invested with *miraculous* powers. Nevertheless I do not know that it would be imperative logically, on no more specific information, to say that a religion, whose origin was so indistinctly understood, was of *Divine* authority. Utterly inexplicable as its rise and progress might be considered, yet between this admission and the acknowledgment of its claims to be a revelation from the one God, would be left an interval of doubtful speculation.

In this position of things, let us suppose the attention of the inquirer to have been directed, for the first time, not to the New, but to the Old Testament. The language in which this is written would be a guarantee of its antiquity: the hands in whose keeping it had been preserved, would be a warrant for its genuineness: any suspicion of interpolation, on the part of Christians at least, would be impossible.

The main facts recoverable from Justin, etc., but not the cause precisely.

And here the Old Testament, which we are supposed to have still retained, is all important.

Other things there might be about it to excite our curiosity, but it is in relation to the particular problem we have been speaking of, this sudden explosion of the Gospel, that its importance would be chiefly felt ; and felt, I think, not without some surprise.

For the whole of it refers to an aboriginal *Promise*, and that

Upon examining the volume attentively, we find that a large portion of certain parts of it was directly referrible, and the remainder often indirectly, to a *Promise* said to have been made by the Supreme Being to the original parents of the great family of mankind—to Adam and to Eve—purporting that certain privileges, forfeited by them and withdrawn from their children, should be restored to the race in the person of one of their descendants, who is described as “the seed of the woman.” This Promise, vaguely expressed indeed, but embracing apparently the whole posterity of Adam, was in process of time repeatedly renewed ; and renewed on each occasion with some circumstance appended, clearing up, and at the same time defining its meaning ; until at length it becomes plain, that the sense of it must be understood as indicating the approach of some great and mysterious individual, through whom the Almighty proposed to enter into new relations with His creatures, under a new and supreme dispensation.

through a future super-natural Person.

The names under which this exalted Person is signified are commensurate with so high an embassy. “Thy King cometh ;” “thy Salvation cometh ;” “the Lord cometh ;” “the Messenger of the covenant, He shall come ;” “the desire of all nations shall come ;” “the Son of God ;” “the Son of Man ;” “the holy One ;” “the just One ;” “the Lord our Righteousness ;” are also titles attributed to Him ; but the appropriate name by which He was more



characteristically designated, was "the Messiah," that is, "the Christ," or the Anointed One.

On further examination, we find that the revelation, of which this Divine Messenger was to be the herald, is sufficiently distinct as to its leading feature, however indefinite as to some of the particular truths that were to be disclosed. Conformably with the promise made to Adam, it was to be a dispensation under which an atonement and reconciliation of some sort was to be effected, upon repentance, between man and his offended Maker.

Nature of  
the new  
dispensa-  
tion.

In that day all the false worships in the world were to disappear; "the idols were to be utterly abolished; they were to go into the holes of the rocks and caves of the earth," for fear of the Lord; whose power alone was to be exalted, and "the earth was to be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "The kingdoms of the world" were to become "the kingdoms of the Lord;"—"a new heaven and a new earth were to be created," in which the righteous only should dwell, by "an everlasting covenant, which should never be destroyed, but stand fast for ever."

Its vast  
conse-  
quences.

Sublime as is the language in which the general import of the Promise is here described, yet the dignity of the Messenger, in whom the fulfilment of it was to be accomplished, and upon whose shoulders the government of this mysterious kingdom was to be placed, is expressed in terms, which, if possible, are still more sublime. His name, we are told, shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" and of the "increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

His divine  
attributes.

His  
deport-  
ment on  
earth.

But though "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him;" though His dominion, it is said, "shall extend from one end of the earth to the other;" though "kings shall bow down before Him," and angels worship Him—yet He will have no external marks of greatness or superiority; He will "have no form or comeliness," and when men shall see Him, we are warned, that "there will be no beauty," that is, in Oriental sense, no secular pomp to attract to His service. His first appearance will be "without noise or obstruction; He will not cry, nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets," but He will grow up silently and imperceptibly, "like a tender plant, or a root out of a dry ground." Moreover He was to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" He was to be taken "from prison and from judgment, and be brought like a lamb to the slaughter;" but it was "for our transgressions," that the promised Deliverer was "to be wounded;" He was to "be bruised for our iniquities;" He was to make "intercession for transgressors, by yielding His soul an offering for sin." Wherefore Jerusalem is told to "break forth into singing, and cry aloud;" to "enlarge the place of her tent, and to stretch forth the curtains of her habitation;" for that she shall "break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles."

The sub-  
ject of  
Promise is  
a religion,  
a *creed*,  
matter to  
be *believed*.

This is the kind of language, and such the figures, in which the Old Testament speaks of the triumphs of the Gospel, and such, in few words, is the essential contents of that great Promise, towards which prophecy directed the thoughts and expectations of mankind. It is obvious to remark that the subject of it, thus opened in Israel, is not limited to time or place,

but embraces all ages and nations. The event to which it points, is not, as I have before had occasion to observe, the downfall of an old, and the rise of a new empire in the world ; but the downfall of an old, and the rise of a new and exclusive religious institution—a creed—a moral and not a political revolution ; not something which was to happen from without to mankind, but something which they would, at a certain period, be brought to *believe*.<sup>1</sup> That this promise has so far been fulfilled, needs not here to be stated : we ourselves are the witnesses, or perhaps I should rather say, we are ourselves evidence—art and part, of the great fact.

We shall also have to point out that combined with the revelation of certain truths, and the positive annunciation of future mercies and blessings, there is a variety of prophecies, circumstantial only, and having no necessary relation to the Promise itself, but only such matters as the time when the Mediator of this new covenant between God and man would appear upon earth ; to the lineage and family from which He was to spring ; the place where He was to be born ; and other particulars of a contingent kind ; these would be indeed useful marks, by means of which the fulfilment of the Promise was, at the predicted period, to be ascertained ; but the effect of such was chiefly negative, as serving for the exclusion of any Pseudo-Messiah.

As, however, we are examining the effect of the Old Testament by itself upon the evidences of the Gospel—supposing for the moment all testimony from the Evangelists to be lost or set aside—we are so far prevented from adducing any thing which we learn from

Prophecy combines, withal, many notes merely negative, or exclusive of Pseudo-Christ.

So that, from the Old Testament alone, our present belief is seen to

<sup>1</sup> By reason, however, of which *inward* adhesion of individual consciences, a new and universal polity would come into play.  
—ED.

answer, in  
fact, to the  
original  
Promise of  
God.

the Gospels, by way of showing the correspondence between the prophetic and the historical proofs of Divine authority of our faith. But the proof of this is not necessary. For, let me repeat it, the proposition which I have been just now endeavouring to explain is *this*: that if we compare the Revelation which was foreshown in the Old Testament, with the religion now established and practised in the world; or the marks laid down in the prophecies, by which the future coming of the Messiah was to be certified, with the mere facts relating to the nation, and family, and birth-place, and life and death of Jesus Christ, as now asserted by all Christians; we are authorized in saying, that the present belief of mankind corresponds with the Promise made to them by God, many ages before it was actually fulfilled.

A point  
seized at  
once,  
without  
need of  
arguments.

The proof of this requires no scholarship nor laborious argument. We are not called upon to say whether the facts asserted are true, but only to inquire what are the facts which Christians now *believe*; and with this limitation of the question, it is plain that, so far as concerns the general history and character of Jesus Christ, or the great and leading doctrinal positions which constitute the Faith of which He was the founder, these are points which will be found laid down by the prophets of the Old Law almost as unambiguously, in some instances, as by the writers of the New. Whether the four Gospels, however inestimable, had come down to us or not, would therefore make but little difference in *that* part of the argument by which we connect the belief of the Revelation itself with the testimony of prophecy. We learn indeed from the New Testament the *process* by which the fulfilment of the prophecies was brought about; but their fulfilment

itself is now a *separate* matter of fact, and independent of any knowledge or ignorance as to the manner in which it came to pass. The correspondence between the doctrines actually received in regular Christendom with that promised revelation—that aboriginal Word of God to Adam—which directly or indirectly is the key of the Old Testament, is not a merely verbal coincidence, but a coincidence withal and rencounter of facts: a coincidence, that is, between visibly existing facts and the fact of a previous expectation, not less ascertainable and founded notoriously on the “preparation of *prophecy*.” And here it matters not, as I shall have occasion to show, whether the language of prophecy has been grammatically interpreted or not. Our present business is to take it in the sense in which it was understood, by those who lived *before* its fulfilment;—in the sense, that is to say, on which this previous expectation was in fact built. If that was *not* the real sense of the writer, the conformity of a contingent event with that previous *wrong* interpretation becomes only the more difficult to explain.

It is obvious, no doubt, to say that this concurrence was accidental: and if we were examining the case of a solitary prediction, this might be a satisfactory explanation. But the coincidences in the present case are not of a kind, or, if they were, they are too numerous, to admit of this supposition. It is not one fact only, nor one truth, but many facts and many truths, which were signified beforehand. Neither are we speaking of facts and truths unconnected with each other or with any pre-conceived design; but we have to do with events which came to pass in regular sequence, and forming, when put together, one organic whole. This does not look like an effect of chance,

These coincidences too many to be accidental.



but of a wisdom far above the kind of knowledge, which human agents have ever been seen to display.

That a human being by some effort or process of reasoning with which we are unacquainted, should have come to guess beforehand certain stated facts in the natural order which had afterwards come to pass ; or that he should be able to anticipate certain doctrines, having a foundation in reason, which mankind in the lapse of ages would be brought to develop and entertain, is at least an intelligible supposition ; but to suppose that any depth of wisdom, or art, or science should enable him to calculate by reason, or any accident enable him to guess by chance, that mankind would come, some hundred years after, to believe in a particular fable, in a certain dream, founded neither in natural reason nor human experience, neither in truth nor in fact, implies a proposition which is utterly incomprehensible.

Whatever our speculations, the facts of such conformity must ever remain ; and so the *Divine* origin of the faith is proved.

But whatever explanation we may adopt, the view which I am now taking of the subject is founded upon facts, so patent, that a man is not at liberty to call them in question, because he may have made up his mind not to believe that a Divine revelation is possible. The minute and circumstantial conformity of the religion of Christ with the revelation which the Jews had been taught to fix their hopes upon, will continue to be a matter of fact, even though we should go so far as to assert the existence of such a person as Jesus to be a fiction or mythus, and all that is believed concerning Him to be nothing more than the work of a busy or ambitious imagination. They who so speak will have indeed to explain the existing belief of mankind, on some hypothesis different from that which is given in the New Testament ; but this, as it appears to me, will

be the only difference, so far as the present argument is concerned.

If—as *we* all believe—the facts related by the Apostles really happened, then the fulfilment of the prophecies to which they appealed, and consequently the *Divine* origin of the religion which they preached, may be shown on a testimony whose weight no one would pretend to question; namely, the signs, and wonders, and innumerable miracles by which the publication of it was accompanied. If, on the other hand, it is contended that these last did not really happen, and we suppose, with Voltaire and some recent writers, Christianity to be only a form of superstition, in this case the proposition is only changed; and those who so deem of it will then be called upon to explain how it has come to pass, that the present *belief* of mankind in facts which *never* happened, and in doctrines that never had foundation in truth, either human or Divine, should yet be found delineated, and foreshown, in books of which the latest, beyond all question, was written not less than 400 years before this belief was known in the world. To say that this miraculous knowledge was given to the writers by illumination, would, of course, be contrary to the non-believing hypothesis. As little will it be asserted that this knowledge was acquired by reason; for *reason* never could have anticipated the belief of mankind, in propositions deemed *contrary* to reason. To ascribe the whole to *chance* is almost as difficult a supposition; but it involves no metaphysical absurdity. As people have been found to conceive that the world was created by the fortuitous concourse of blind atoms, perhaps a similar explanation may be had recourse to, in order to account for the establishment of Christianity in

Or, if men made this great change on belief of fictions, how came such strange conduct to be foretold centuries before?

the world ; in a choice of difficulties, this last would appear to be the least ; the other it seems impossible to comprehend ; but I do not think it a kind of explanation to satisfy a man of sober judgment.

Enough has been now said to show that prophecy ought not to be considered, as even Paley calls and treats it, a mere “ ancillary argument ” in the proofs of Christianity. It still is, as it was in the time of the Apostles, the substantive and concurrent evidence, complete in itself, resting on its *own* strength, and requiring no other witness than the *proof* of its truth, which the actual belief of mankind is sufficient to provide.

It is easy, however, to see that this was not the position which this testimony from Prediction occupied in the days of the Apostles themselves. They could not *yet* appeal to the actual belief of mankind in proof of its fulfilment, at a time when all the world was either Jewish or Pagan. The evidence in their hands must at that moment have taken quite another shape. When *they* adduced the Old Testament as a witness to the religion which they preached, it must have been not to the actual success of the Christian system, but to some motive of a totally different kind that they addressed themselves.

It may be true, as we have been arguing, that Christianity could, in *this* day, stand on the evidence of the Old Testament alone, independently even of the New : but it could *not* have so stood in the time of the Apostles. The proof of our Saviour having been that Messiah whom the prophets had foretold, could not, in that *interim*, have been shown, nor could He even have interested the hearers, without the miracles which He wrought ; and as little could the miracles

which He so publicly wrought, have proved Him, to Jewish reason, to *be* that same Messiah, except for certain *special notes* or marks by which His sacred person, when He came, was to be identified, and at the same time distinguished.

It is to this last subject, or, to what are called by the Jews the *notes* of the Messiah, that the attention of the reader will now be directed. The present proofs for ourselves of the Divine authority of the Gospel are happily not only more simple in their kind, and less difficult in various ways, than were the proofs with which the Apostles had to deal ; but (though the matter is the same) they belong to different departments of reasoning ; and they must therefore be examined apart, as two distinct and independent questions. But before taking our final leave of the present evidences, I am tempted to make one more remark.

The proofs of Christianity have, sometimes, been said to be only *probable*, as must necessarily be the case, except when the subject in discussion is some matter of fact, and not a mathematical or metaphysical proposition. But probability is a word the meaning of which admits of every degree, whether of certainty or uncertainty ; even the mathematician is sometimes glad to submit his clearest deductions to what he calls a proof. For this purpose he does not simply revise his calculation, but he subjects it to some other process of demonstration ; and if he finds that two opposite and distinct lines of reasoning lead to one and the same result, he considers that his calculation may be regarded as proved. Just so it is in the case before us ; whether we reason from the miracles of the New Testament, or the prophecies of the Old, if we take

the present belief of mankind, the fact, in short, of Christendom as our datum, the conclusion, as to the Divine basis, as we have seen, comes out the same ; and this result we obtain from two principles of reasoning, as independent of each other as the strictest demonstration would require.



## PART II.

GROUNDS OF BELIEF IN THE TIMES OF THE  
 APOSTLES EXAMINED.



## PART II.

### CHAPTER I.

#### ANTECEDENT EXPECTATION ARISING FROM UNFULFILLED PROPHECY.

New religion—Evidence for such considered abstractedly—Miracles as a proof of it—Illustration of foregoing remarks—Effect of an antecedent expectation—Hume's examples examined.

WE have seen, when speaking of the proof on which the belief of the Gospel in our own minds now depends, that the present view of the question always in truth, if not in our consciousness, presupposes the ever-patent fact or datum of an already *established* religion; and therefore that the reason which we *now* address to inquirers would not have been available in the hands of the Apostles, while this religion, as fact, was yet in the future.

Our present belief of the miracles pre-supposes a religion already *established*.

I shall now proceed to show more fully, *à contra*, that the main end of prophecy among the *Jews*, was to prepare their minds for the *future* advent of the Messiah, and to authenticate His person when He should be present; and that both they and the early Apologists agree in declaring that the means of this preparation was contained in the Old Testament.

Before entering, however, upon an inquiry as to the object for which the prophetic economy would appear to have been planned, let us look at the subject in the

But suppose revelation only more proposed,

abstract ; and, dismissing for a time the particular case of the Gospel institutions, suppose ourselves to be discussing the evidence, not of an established Revelation, but of one presented for the *first* time to our belief.

how is it  
to be  
proved  
from God?

We will begin with the simplest case that can be proposed ; that of a *single* miracle, for some miracle *must* be supposed. How could this be demonstrated to have been wrought by God ? Assuming all the facts to have been proved, that no question was raised as to the truth or honesty of the witnesses, but that an event deemed to be preternatural, that is to say, outside of all experience of the usual course of nature, had notoriously come to pass ; what proposition would first require to be proved, before we could certainly predicate that this was the effect of an immediate *Divine* interposition ?

In the present day this question is, for the most part, very summarily answered. In fact, it is not even among the points, which Paley, or Lardner, or Michaelis, or any recent writers upon the Evidences, with whose works I am acquainted, deem it so much necessary to discuss. If the facts related in the New Testament really happened, the authority by which they were wrought is forthwith assumed to have been no *less* than *Divine*. Practically this may be a just, but it is not a *necessary* conclusion, even at the present day ; and certainly it was not so considered in the age of the Apostles. Neither would it be so considered among ourselves in the supposed case (which was also the fact) of a *new* religion, to be introduced with all its consequences.

If miracles  
true, we  
now say  
they *must*  
be from  
God alone.

We are accustomed now to demonstrate the Divine authority of the miracles of Christ, by a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. We do not so much as attempt to show it by direct reasoning, but we assume that any other

explanation is impossible. Nothing can be more plain, however, than that in the case of a miracle supposed to be wrought at *this* day, and presented for the first time to our notice, this way of reasoning could not be admitted. So momentous a point as the immediate will or agency of God for such purpose is one that requires to be proved, not by arguments drawn *ab ignorantia*, but from positive reasons drawn from considerations irrespective of the mere wonderfulness of the fact. This will, perhaps, appear more clearly, if we stop to examine for a moment, what that is on which the proof that an event, visibly out of the ordinary course of nature, is miraculous, in the evidential sense, properly depends.

A persuasion of the general permanency of the laws of nature is so inseparable from the constitution of our minds, that it is not uncommon to find it classed apart as an original principle of the understanding. But the uniform sequence of the process of nature is a fact quite independent of our understandings; and why this persuasion in particular should require, as with Reid, an original principle of the mind, more than many other elementary truths, is by no means obvious. A metaphysical truth, that is, an inference of pure reason antecedent to all experience, doubtless such confidence, however just, is *not*, it is but a provisional, though an almost inevitable conclusion of our minds. It seems to me, in fact, to be only another way of affirming the well-known maxim, that whatever is, will continue to exist in the same state;—a body in motion, to persevere in a state of motion; a body at rest, to remain at rest; until the presence or withdrawal of some cause interrupting the existing state of things. This proposition, as is well known, is assumed by Newton, as one of the axioms on which

Against which is urged permanence of the laws of nature.



he has explained the system of the universe, the maxim, that is, of a sufficient reason.

So that  
we have  
to prove  
a *sufficient*  
cause

Now, as the assertion of a miracle, in any particular case, contraverses this primary axiom, we see what it is which lies at the bottom of the incredulity, with which a person of good sense will listen to stories given as miraculous ; and by the same rule, we also see what it is we have to do in order to make them credible, viz. we have to *prove* the sufficient cause ; if we can only demonstrate the presence of a *sufficient* cause for the deviation, the most improbable event may be shown just as credible as any common occurrence which falls under the notice of our senses. For it must be evident to any Savant, recognising logical requirements, that no mere induction can be *exhaustive*, and so prove a negative.

formiracle,  
or an  
expressed  
purpose  
of God.

But the only sufficient cause of a miracle is the will of God ; what, therefore, we have to prove in the case of a revelation is an assigned purpose of God.

To illustrate the foregoing remarks I will adduce an example.

Effect of  
expecta-  
tion in  
physical  
case on  
belief.

The disappearance of the moon from our solar system would seem to be as unlikely an event as could well be predicted. Nevertheless, if it had been foretold by Sir Isaac Newton, as an event which, from astronomical calculations not liable to error, would come to pass in a certain stated year ; that is to say, supposing him to have demonstrated the sufficient cause of this catastrophe, as clearly as he has demonstrated the law of nature by which the planets are retained in their orbits, it would not, in that case, be deemed incredible. On the contrary, every one who understood the reasoning, and was satisfied with the correctness of the premises on which the calculations

were grounded, would confidently *expect* them to be verified. Moreover, when the event *did* happen, he would have no doubt about the causes having been the same, as had previously been laid down.

Now, this conclusion will not be in the least changed by supposing the reasoning to concern a question in the religious order, instead of one of natural philosophy. Take any case we please, reasoning upon it as in the example just now proposed ; if we could demonstrate, *à priori*, not a mere possibility, but the actual fact of a fixed design on the part of God to make at a predicted period, a revelation of His will to mankind, and one such as would of necessity entail a deviation from the course of nature, so that a large number of persons were aware beforehand, and were waiting in the daily expectation of this communication from God—if this expectation should come to be realized, it is plain that mankind would not—any more than in the case before adverted to—dispute about the abstract credibility of miracles, merely because they were wonderful, and presupposed an interruption of the course of nature ; nor, supposing miracles to have been actually wrought, would they dispute about the *sufficiency* of the cause of them. The antecedent knowledge and expectation of mankind would silence all arguments drawn from mere general reasoning. This it certainly would do, as we have seen, if the question related to matters pertaining to natural philosophy ; and I can assign no reason why the case would not be the same in a matter connected with revelation.

So also  
in natural  
theology.

So no one  
disputes  
credibility  
of miracle  
if before-  
hand  
expected.

For let us put the case here supposed, and imagine for a moment that some such persuasion as I am here speaking of, existed in the public mind at the present time ; that there was among *ourselves* a widely-

For if men  
to-day  
expected a  
revelation,

dispersed expectation of some new dispensation of things about to arise, under which an important alteration would be promulged to mankind, relating to God's government of the race. In what way the knowledge of this intended dispensation may have been communicated is not material ; it will not affect the conclusion. Let, then, the assumed expectation, if you please, be an opinion derived from mathematical calculations, such as men build upon when they expect a comet to appear ; or let it be a strong persuasion drawn only from imaginary data ; let it be confined to the breasts of a few philosophers and learned men, or be entertained by the vulgar and unlearned alone ; let the origin of it be viewed in every different light, some considering the reasons to be certain, and some only possible, and others regarding them as absurd : frame the hypothesis in any way we choose, we have only to put the case, that the opinion prevailed *beforehand* ; that it had been publicly talked about ; that mankind was gazing in *expectation*, some looking to the event with earnest belief, others with doubt, or, it may be, with ridicule—all this will matter little in the practical result. If the event should turn out to correspond with the popular expectation ; if a revelation should be announced ; if facts apparently miraculous should be wrought in testimony of its truth ; if thousands and ten thousands should immediately enrol themselves among its followers, and, in the course of a few years, all nations and languages of mankind should acknowledge its Divine authority—such a case, if *real*, would, in the opinion of the immense majority of mankind, be deemed demonstrative of its claims on our assent. Philosophers and learned men might argue about the

and it  
came to  
pass just  
as foretold,

obscurity of the original reasons on which the expectation of mankind had been built ; might show the improbability of a Divine revelation, and the incredibility of miracles, and expatiate upon the proverbial credulity of the vulgar ; but not all the reasoning in the world would weigh against such facts as I have here supposed ; but, at all events, these facts would explain and justify the *belief* of mankind. If it were possible to show that such was the hypothesis on which, as we said, Mahommedanism, even, or any religious adventure whatever, stood, the belief of it would be vainly encountered by general reasoning : the *facts* would have to be disproved.

it would,  
in fact,  
be justly  
believed ;

In these remarks I have been looking at the question in the *abstract*, confining my view in order to simplify the argument, to an inquiry as to the evidence that would be necessary in order to bring mankind at large to believe in the Divine authority, not of an established faith, to which we invite the heathen now, but of a revelation, presented, for the first time, to their minds. I will limit our supposition to the case of a dogmatic revelation, which should appeal solely to the *reason* and conscience of mankind ; and with this qualification, thus much, I think, may be certainly admitted : that if such a revelation, attested by appropriate facts, and preceded by a wide but conformable expectation among all classes of men, were at this time, and in our own country, presented before us, we should hardly reject its authority.

and this,  
even, in  
case of a  
dogmatic  
revelation  
appealing  
only to  
reason.

Let us try the truth of this opinion by examples. For this purpose I will take the very cases which Hume brings forward as instances in which he says the proof of a præternatural intervention would *not* be possible. “*Suppose*,” says he, “*all authors in all*

Hume's  
case tested  
for evi-  
dence of  
miracle  
*alone*.

languages agree that from the 1st of January, 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days; suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people; that all travellers who return from other countries bring us accounts of the same tradition; it is evident that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain, and confine their search for the causes whence it might be derived. The decay, corruption, and dissolution of nature, is an event rendered probable by so many analogies, that any phenomenon which seems to have a tendency towards that catastrophe, comes within the reach of human testimony." In this passage it is plain that Hume grounds the credibility of the solution which he here suggests, on its greater antecedent probability only; and he prefaces his explanation with the significant words, "*I beg the limitations here made may be remarked, when I say that a miracle never can be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For I own that otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony, though perhaps it is impossible to find any such in all the records of history.*" That is to say, that, after all, violations of the usual course of nature may happen, and may be proved on human testimony; only they cannot be made the foundation of any religious belief; because even if they should happen, such causes as he assigns would in all cases be more antecedently probable than the supposition of their having been intended to answer a Divine purpose. The question, then, as he here states it, is as to what explanation would be the most antecedently probable.



Now there is not much fault to find with any part of this reasoning of Hume's. I feel inclined to believe that he may be right in saying that a miracle only can never be proved so as to be the "foundation of anything so great as a system of religion," or of any system of opinions. That is a miracle *alone*; but whether it may not be so, in combination with other and anterior evidence, is by no means clear, as we shall soon see.

For let us assume, in any case, a purpose in the Divine mind; and suppose that there had been among men a tradition, generally known, but the origin of which could not be traced, that after the year 1600 the Gospel institutions would be embraced by every people under heaven, and heathenism cease throughout the earth. We will also suppose that contemporaneously with this tradition there had existed a parallel tradition that in the same year, and as the signal of the imminent intervention, a darkness, such as Hume supposes, would be seen to cover the earth for a specified number of days. Add to this, that there should be, at the very time, thousands of persons in different regions, all upon the alert, earnestly watching the times and seasons—now, if while this state of things was at its height, the sun and moon had gradually ceased to give their light, and had continued veiled in darkness for the exact period which the foreboding had pre-signified: let me ask whether we believe that Hume, supposing him to have been then living, would have persisted in affirming, that "a miracle could never be made so *certain* as to be the foundation of a system of belief"? or have deemed the contrary opinion a mere superstition? It is certain, at least, that mankind

Hume so far right.

But not if Divine design of it be proved, withal.

in general would have come to quite a different conclusion.

Another  
plausible  
case.

But the philosopher proceeds to state a further case, still more incredible. "Suppose," says he, "that all the historians who treat of England should agree that, on the 1st of January, 1600, Queen Elizabeth died; that, before and after her death, she was seen by her physicians, and her whole court, as is usual with persons of her rank; that her successor was acknowledged and proclaimed by the parliament; and that, after being interred a month, she again appeared, resumed the throne, and governed England for three years:—I must confess that I should be surprised at the concurrence of so many odd circumstances, but should not have the least inclination to believe so miraculous an event. I should not doubt of her pretended death, and of those other public circumstances that followed it. I should only assert it to have been pretended, and that it neither was, nor could be, real. You would in vain object to me the difficulty, and almost impossibility, of deceiving the world in an affair of such consequence; the wisdom and solid justice of that renowned queen; with the little or no advantage she could gain from so poor an artifice. All this might indeed astonish me; but I would still reply, that the knavery and folly of men are such common phenomena, that I should rather believe the most extraordinary events to arise from their concurrence, than admit of so signal a violation of the laws of nature."

But suppose antecedent expectation, as in

I incline to think that Hume has rightly expressed what, in the circumstances he has stated, would be the conclusion of most persons of sound understanding. But let us try what would be the effect, if we

connect the events which he has stated, with a supposed antecedent *expectation* among mankind of some such strange occurrences.

And first, let us amend the case, as here imagined. <sup>following case.</sup> Queen Elizabeth is here supposed dying in her bed, privately, surrounded by her physicians and court ;—that is, by her friends and dependents. But instead of Queen Elizabeth, let us substitute the name of King Charles the First, whose head was cut off before thousands of spectators, and whose executioners were his bitter enemies, or at least men who had a direct interest in his death. This alteration of the circumstances of the case will bring it nearer to the one which, not improbably, was in Hume's mind at the time he was writing. Moreover, it renders the fact, to all appearance, more unequivocally miraculous ; and therefore, no doubt, more impossible in itself, and more difficult to consider as having really happened.

The case being thus assumed, let us suppose man- <sup>Continued.</sup> kind in general, in the year 1648, though otherwise well taught and highly civilized, yet in the matter of true religion, to have been immersed in ignorance, as dark as that which prevailed throughout the world in the days of Augustus. Suppose, however, that one nation there yet was, very numerous in itself, and individuals of which were to be found in almost every quarter of the world, who professed a purer worship ; among whom a rooted opinion was well known to prevail, that in the very generation of which we speak, a revelation would be made from Heaven, the effect of which would be to subvert the existing idolatry in the world, and to introduce institutions, in which the worship of the one only God would form the

leading feature. Let us suppose, finally, that when the surrounding people had inquired what was to be the sign by which the arrival of this epoch was to be known, they had received for answer, that when the time had arrived, mankind would know it, by the King of England being put to death by the public executioner, and afterwards rising from the grave and resuming his throne.

What  
would  
then  
Hume say?

The question now is, whether, if this fact had happened; or (which is nearly the same thing for all the purposes of the argument) if all mankind had *believed* it to have happened; if, too, from the date of this persuasion, paganism immediately had begun to stagger, and had thence rapidly declined, while the worship of the alone true God had immediately begun to spread itself, by a simultaneous dispersion, over all the nations, so as to have become, in the course of two or three generations, the predominant faith:—the question, I say, is whether, in these unusual circumstances, even Hume would think “the knavery and folly of mankind” the most probable explanation of the phenomena? For my part, I feel inclined to think, that in such a case as has here been supposed, the most sceptical reasoner that ever lived would look about him for some very different solution; and whether he found it or not, could at least understand why mankind in general should have been content to receive the facts as marked by the hand of God.

Whatever might have been the incredulity with which particular individuals, or even the majority of sober-minded persons might previously have regarded the *expectation* of the common people, yet both the wise and the unwise could but come to one opinion after its fulfilment. In both cases, the more wonderful

and the more contrary to all experience, we assume the facts to have been regarded beforehand, if they happened in accordance with the previous *expectation*, not only they would “come within the reach of human testimony” when they did happen, but in “searching for the causes whence they might be derived,” as Hume says we should do, “the decay, corruption, or dissolution of *nature*,” or “the knavery and folly of mankind,” would, I think, be considered among the least probable explanations of either of the phenomena which “our present philosophers” would adopt.



## CHAPTER II.

### EFFECT OF ANTECEDENT EXPECTATION FURTHER ILLUSTRATED.

General belief in a future state—*A priori* argument for expecting a revelation—Paley's reasoning.

Belief in  
future state  
rooted in  
our nature.

THE belief of mankind in the hope of another life, however derived, has prevailed so extensively in all ages and nations, that it would seem to have its root in some original disposition of the human mind. Cicero tells us, *Nisi cognitum comprehensumque animis haberemus, non tam stabilis opinio permaneret, nec confirmaretur diuturnitate temporis, nec una cum sæculis ætatibusque hominum inveterare potuisset.* The reason of this widely-spread opinion, this *sæculorum quasi augurium futurorum*, as Cicero elsewhere calls it, need not be discussed in this place ; it is sufficient that such an opinion, whether true or false, has always existed. Assuming this to be a fact, it would seem not unnatural for mankind to have inferred from the tendencies of virtue and vice to produce happiness or misery in the world which we now live in, that in the next, the same principle will be more fully developed ; and those manifold exceptions to the rule, observable in the unequal fortunes of mankind here below, be hereafter rectified.

Good  
reasons  
for it,

That there is nothing incredible in this doctrine, nothing in it contrary to the common sense and reason of mankind, will not be gainsaid. And supposing it

to be *true* (which it easily might be, and we not know it), the authoritative publication of a truth so nearly concerning the interests of mankind, would evidently afford a motive and reason sufficient to constitute the *hypothesis* of a Divine revelation on so momentous a point. The language of antiquity will, I think, prove so much. There is a well-known passage of the Alcibiades, in which Socrates is made to intimate, not only his belief of a future life, but his belief that some Divine communication will in process of time be made to mankind respecting it. Now an opinion put into the mouth of Socrates, and that by Plato, must not be treated as incredible or absurd. It cannot be otherwise regarded than as a strong testimony to show that there is no *philosophical* absurdity in the hypothesis of a Divine revelation ; although it is certain neither he nor Plato could have had any evidence, nothing but the abstract probability of the hypothesis, on which to found their conclusion.

“Suppose the world we live in to have had a <sup>and why</sup> Creator,” they might have said ; “suppose a part of <sup>Creator</sup> the creation to have had faculties from their Maker, <sup>should</sup> <sup>also reveal</sup> it, by which they are capable of rendering a moral obedience to His will, and of voluntarily pursuing any end for which He may have designed them ; suppose the Creator to intend for these His rational and intelligent agents, a second state of existence, in which their situation will be regulated by their conduct in this first state ; suppose it to be of the utmost importance to the subjects of this dispensation, to know what is intended for them : suppose, nevertheless, almost the whole race, either by the imperfection of their faculties, or the misfortune of their situation, to want this knowledge :”—these, they might have argued, “must

be admitted to be, so many, probable suppositions, and may be *true* ones ; and in this last case was not a revelation to be expected at the hands of a wise and beneficent Being? Suppose Him to design for mankind a future state, can you be surprised that He should acquaint them with it ?”

So Paley  
reasons.

This is the reasoning of Paley ; and as applied by him at the present time, and to the case of a long *established* Belief, it is surely just and solid reasoning. But let us suppose it to be employed in the imaginary case of the scene of the argument being at Athens ; and we shall at once see what would have been the answer in that place.

But the  
query is,  
has it in  
fact been  
revealed ?

It would have been said to Socrates, “We are inquiring whether a certain stated doctrine ought to be received as given by Divine authority ; and instead of proving the *fact* of such a design, you philosophers are only showing that the supposition is not *absurd* or incredible. The ground on which you have built your conclusion is not any direct proof of what God has *done* or *will* do, but upon a general consideration of God’s attributes, on the one hand, and of the condition of human nature on the other. But these are reasons which were just as true at the time of Deucalion, or when Pythagoras was born. No change that we are able to detect has taken place in the intervening time, as to the circumstances of mankind, nor, if we may trust to our observation, in the rules of God’s government. Great, indeed, is the ignorance which prevails in the world, as to the true nature of God, and of the worship which ought to be paid to Him ; great is the need we have of some Divine instruction, in case God’s human creation are to be held responsible in another life, for all the follies and

immoralities they are too often guilty of in the present, but all this was as true a thousand years ago as it is now. For mankind are not more ignorant or more wicked than in former ages; why then was the blessing of a revelation so long kept back? The more clear you consider the *need* of a revelation, the weaker, on your premises, becomes the presumption of the doctrine being true, from the fact of so many millions of human beings having been permitted to live and die in every age of the world, ignorant of a dispensation which, if true, it would so greatly have concerned them to have known."

We have here been assuming nothing more to be in question than the authoritative publication of a doctrine, already anticipated, more or less, as a persuasion both in the traditions of the vulgar, and in the opinions of the learned; but if we ground our conclusion for such revelation on some hypothesis possessing *no antecedent* probability, but presupposing the communication of some truth devoid of seeming probability, Paley's *à priori* reasoning, just adverted to, falls to the ground: and if we put the case of its presupposing the disclosure of matter widely *remote* from the guesses of human wisdom; the argument may be even turned in the opposite direction. If, however, there would have been in the time of the Apostles a difficulty in establishing, in men's minds, on human grounds of argument, the belief of a revelation containing but *one* article of doctrine, and that one article abstractedly probable; the difficulty will be greatly increased, if we suppose a revelation containing not one, but *many* affirmations; and those, not intrinsically probable truths, but truths at *variance* with previous conjecture or belief.

This *fact* is to be proved even for an opinion so probable *per se*;

But what if most improbable?

For it is not the reasonableness of *some* revelation only, but of *one*, and that very improbable, that is to be proved.

But we have not only to prove it possible, but to make it *probable*.

It is a common oversight of writers upon the Evidences of Christianity, to state the question as if the point in issue was simply as to the reasonableness in the abstract that *some* revelation should be made; —but our only question is, as to the reasonableness of a *particular* revelation; one requiring our belief, not merely in the leading doctrines of what is termed natural religion, but in doctrines which human wisdom would never have conjectured; and the truth of which cannot therefore be made credible, *à priori*, on any proofs which the art of man is able to suggest.

Now although we may often, by reasoning alone, prove a fact to be *possible*, yet we cannot always prove it *probable* by mere *reasoning*. But I have shown, in the preceding chapter, that even so much as *this* may be accomplished by a preparatory dispensation of *prophecy*. That which no strength of reasoning, no argument founded on any data of human experience, could render antecedently probable, may be made, not merely probable but *certain* when disclosed, in the belief of mankind, in a case where we suppose their imagination to have been already occupied by a foregoing expectation of such communications.



## CHAPTER III.

### EVIDENCE IN THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES.

Evidence from the Old Testament—The same used by the early Fathers — Examples — Connexion between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures—Prophecy a proof of Divine Providence —Not open to suspicion of fraud—Illustration of the foregoing argument.

WE now proceed to inquire what was the principle of reasoning on which the Apostles mainly rested their proof. Reasoning on which the Apostles built.

I mentioned, in a former chapter, that neither St. Peter nor St. Stephen in the Acts, nor St. Paul in any of his Epistles, had spoken of miracles as a fundamental ground of belief ; except, indeed, in a general way, it may almost be said that they do not allude to them at all. The fact is adverted to by Paley (Part III. ch. v.), as I have before said, and it is dwelt upon by him at some length ; but it is observable that, after discussing the silence of the Apostles, and stating the reasons of it, he does not go on to notice the proof on which they actually did place the argument. He tells us that the Apostles must have taken for granted that the miracles ascribed to Christ were known to all their hearers ; but he does not add, that the medium of proof by which they endeavoured to demonstrate that those miracles had God for their author was altogether drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament. It was not to miracles that they appealed,

but to  
prophecy  
fulfilled.

This fact, however, is so plain a feature in the New Testament, that it may seem unnecessary to occupy the reader's time in proving it, because no one can doubt about it who has examined the volume with any attention. The Apostles do not labour to establish the authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures, nor to show their prophetical character. These points they assume to be matters which none of those with whom they had to reason would call in question. The invariable purport of all their arguments, and which they kept always in view, was to prove that the Gospel which they preached was the subject of the *prophecies* with which those Scriptures were filled; and, so far as appears, it was only this which the Jews denied.

Such was the reasoning of the Apostles. It would be easy to exemplify what I have said from passages without number; but the matter is too clear to require a detailed illustration. If there are any doubts, every one has in his hands the means of satisfying them. Could I take for granted that the writings of those who succeeded the Apostles were as familiarly known as the Christian Scriptures, it would be unnecessary to dwell any longer upon the point. But, if we except professed students in divinity, few persons are perhaps aware that the early Fathers of the Church do not found the controversy upon the miracles of Christ, any more than do the writers of the New Testament; both of them take these wonderful *facts* for granted, but for the *explanation* of them recourse is had only to the Old Testament.

Apostolical  
Fathers.

The earliest Christian writings, after those contained in the New Testament, are a collection of short pieces by the cotemporaries or immediate successors of the Apostles; making together a small volume under the

title of the Apostolical Fathers. That these writings, whether genuine or not, are for the most part of Apostolical antiquity is admitted. But they are purely hortatory, and do not refer to questions which concern unbelievers; and for this reason they throw but little direct light upon the evidences. The same is likewise true, in a greater or less degree, of Irenæus, Cyprian, Epiphanius, and others among the early Fathers. Their writings having been composed exclusively for the use of Christians, or for the refutation of errors within the Church, give us no knowledge of the arguments employed for the conversion of Jews or Pagans; but only of the state of the Church, and of the doctrines and discipline maintained among its members. The works of that age which concern the present inquiry are those which were composed either in defence of the Gospel, or in opposition to heathenism.

Confining ourselves to such writers as were born within the two or three first centuries after the death of Christ, the names which present themselves are those of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, Arnobius. Except Origen, all these appear to have been originally either Gentiles or heathens; and the first observation which I have to make is, that while all of them, either directly or by implication, attribute their own conversion to the study of the Old Testament, not one—if we except Arnobius—appeals to the miracles as a proof of Christ's Divine authority. I remember many years ago having my observation called to this fact by a person, not without a share of learning, who stated it to have been his reason for withholding his belief from Christianity. And no doubt it is true that the early apologists of Christianity, though

Fathers  
of second  
century:

Palgrave,

alluding to the miracles of Christ as substantiating their belief, yet vindicate their belief itself, not on this ground, but on the fulfilment of the Hebrew prophecies, as demonstrated in the rapidity with which, agreeably to the language of Scripture, the kingdom of Christ, even in that early age, had spread throughout the world.

Justin,

There is in Justin's first apology a long and elaborate statement, in which he produces, through several consecutive chapters, the various passages of the Old Testament in which the person of Christ, and the doctrines which He taught, and the success of his preaching, are foreshown; and he prefaces the statement by saying, "Lest any one should say, there is nothing to hinder, but that He who is called Christ among us should have been only a man, and born a man; and have worked by magical arts those wonders which we attribute to miraculous powers, and therefore consider Him to have been the Son of God; we will proceed to show that our opinions are not founded on what persons have said, but on the necessity of believing that which was foretold before it came to pass; inasmuch as we have witnessed, and do still witness with our own eyes, the fulfilling of those predictions: which is a demonstration which I think will appear even to you most true and certain." <sup>1</sup>

Origen,

I am not aware of any passages in the writings of Tertullian or Origen *directly* ascribing the proof of the Divine authority of the miracles of Christ to the prophecies concerning Him, as Justin would seem to do in the above extract; but abundance of passages may be adduced, in which the argument rests solely

<sup>1</sup> Apol. I. § 30.

on this testimony ; while I do not think there is one in which it is made to rest solely on the miracles. In more places than one, Origen charges Celsus with unfairness in his objections against the miracles of Christ, because he must have known, says Origen, that it was not from them that Christians drew their proof of His Divine authority, but from the prophecies of the Old Testament : οὐκ διδ' ὅπως τὸ μέγιστον περὶ τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεφάλαιον, ὥς ὅτι προεφητεύθη ὑπὸ τῶν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις προφητῶν παραπέμπει ἐκόν.

A passage still more pointed, to the same purpose, <sup>Lactan-</sup> is to be found in Lactantius, in the fifth book of his <sup>tius,</sup> Div. Inst. c. 3. “ But Apollonius, it is said, never gave himself out to be a *god* on account of the miracles which he wrought : assuredly not. Nor should we have believed Christ to have been a God, had He merely performed miracles. But learn, that we do not believe Him to have been God, solely for this reason ; but because we have also seen fulfilled in Him all things which the prophets have foretold. He did miracles, it is true ; and we might have supposed Him to have been a mere theurgist and no more (as you now think, and as the Jews at the time thought), if all the prophets, with one consent, had not predicted that He would perform such signs.”—“ *Disce igitur, si quid tibi cordi est, non solum idcirco à nobis Deum creditum Christum, quia mirabilia fecit, sed quia credimus in eo facta esse omnia quæ nobis communicata sunt vaticinio prophetarum. Fecit mirabilia : magum putassemus, ut et vos nunc putatis et Judæi tunc putaverunt, si non illa ipsa esse facturum Christum, prophetæ omnes uno spiritu predicassent.*”

These quotations are sufficient to show that the Augustine



to same  
effect.

same use which was made of the Old Testament by the Apostles, continued to be made of it in the Church long after they had ceased to exist, and even so late as the fourth century, when the question began to change its ground, and Christianity had become the established religion of the empire. The passages in which the fact is directly asserted occur only here and there in the early ecclesiastical writers; but passages exemplifying the same reasoning, whenever the Divine authority of the Gospel was the point at issue, might be alleged to an indefinite extent. I do not mean to say that they express themselves with any sort of reserve about the truth of the miracles of Christ, or, in any way, slur over that part of the argument in the perfunctory way that persons in the present day are sometimes apt to deal with similar instances in the Old Testament: far from it;—but assuming the question to be, not the certainty of the facts, but the proper explanation, they appeal to the Old Testament for the purpose of showing that nothing was asserted, or had been believed of Christ, or had been taught by Him, without the authority of long preceding prophecies, all of which were being fulfilled under their eyes. Like the Apostles, they adduce the miracles which He wrought as a reciprocal<sup>1</sup> test of the prophecies; but it is to these last that the early Fathers formally refer to prove that Jesus was the Christ. They may have been right or wrong, but we have seen what they and their successors for many generations have alleged as the proof on which they chiefly relied. To doubt their statements, or to deny that such was the main pillar of the argument then depended upon, would seem to be

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxi. 1, 2, as appropriated by Jesus Himself at Nazareth.

flying in the face of the plainest historical evidence. "*Dicere autem,*" says St. Augustine, "*non esse aptam gentibus Hebræam prophetiam, cum videat omnes gentes per Hebræam prophetiam credere in Christum, ridicula insania est.*"<sup>1</sup>

But though it might be, as Augustine says, "ridiculous madness" to deny the fact, yet we may, without any such imputation, seek to know more about it than we can commonly collect from popular works upon the evidences. The series of historical events intervening between the times of the Old and New Testaments is a subject which has often engaged attention; but the connexion between the belief of the Jewish and Christian Revelations (which is much the more important question of the two) is commonly passed over, or discussed so slightly as to leave very often an unsatisfactory impression. The cause of this omission may be accounted for; because, as we have seen in a former chapter, the Gospel having become a fact, is now able to stand upon the facts as related in the New Testament alone, without help from the Old; but it did not so stand when it was first proclaimed, and could not; but *why* it could not do so, ought, I think, to have been explained, and is a most interesting subject of investigation.

For, in proving any fact to have been *miraculous*, the difficulty is to find a link by which to connect the testimony of the original witnesses as to what they saw, with the proof of what was no more than a mental inference. Did the fact really *happen*? That,

For truth of Gospel then rested on Old Testament, but not now.

The unseen cause of miracle cannot be proved by oath;

<sup>1</sup> Much light is thrown upon this subject by S. Augustine, in his minor pieces, especially in the little tract drawn up for popular use, "*De Catechisandis Rudibus,*" where we seize the recognized view and method as it were in the act.—ED.

indeed, may be proved on their mere affirmation. But if we go on to ask, *How* did it happen? by what power or authority? for what purpose? these are not questions which can be determined as by oath as to what the witnesses *thought* or believed, but on the reasons they produced in confirmation of their opinion. And these reasons must not be drawn from an *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, as I have before said—because no better occurs—nor from the mere wonderfulness of the facts, but *ex parte externi*, or what is termed the circumstantial evidence.

and this  
was the  
case with  
Apostolic  
miracles,

Now, in the case of miracles which we suppose to have been wrought many ages ago, there is no difficulty in stating where *this* is to be sought. For what assigned end, we ask, were the miracles performed? What was the character of the end proposed? Was it accomplished? The now so obvious answer to these questions at once enables us to determine whether the miracles were the effect of Divine or human agency.

though  
easy for *us*  
who see in  
the church  
the motive  
of them.

But in the case where we may be supposed to be examining *à priori* the meaning and character of signs happening before our own eyes and antecedently to the event, in order to which they have been exhibited, no appeal of this sort can be made. The testimony of subsequent experience is here necessarily wanting; and if we should appeal to reason only, all we could do would be to show that our explanation of the facts involved nothing that was contrary to what we know of God's natural government. This argument from analogy would indeed have been of service in the way of defence against those who should have deemed the doctrines of Christianity to be *abstractedly* absurd or incredible; but it can be pushed no farther, even in the present day.

Here then it was, at the point where the testimony of witnesses could yield no assistance, and where reason could offer nothing but conjecture, that the necessity arose for that indispensable aid which the Old Testament, and the Prophecies especially, afforded to the discussions of the Apostles.

But, in default of accomplishment, came in the *past*, the Old Testament.

And here, perhaps, before I proceed, it may be convenient to make some observations of a merely practical kind on the effect produced by supposed prophecies on the proof of an alleged Divine authority.

There are many events happening every day in the world, which human wisdom might have foreseen as probable. All facts which depend immediately upon the passions and interests of mankind, or which are connected together in some known relation of cause and effect, may be so classed. But people do not commonly waste their thoughts upon *contingent* events, by which is meant events of which no precedent causes can be assigned beforehand; for these are distant in time, and depend upon a variety and long series of circumstances, any one of which not happening, or being changed, would break the chain and perhaps reverse the result: this is a kind of calculation with which men do not commonly amuse their minds, as belonging to a field of speculation far removed beyond the scope of all human conjecture. Any single prediction may come true by chance: the thing is possible; but the supposition of a *series* of predictions coming true by chance is impossible. Such a case would constitute the proof of a Divine agency as nearly approaching to mathematical certainty as any demonstration which can be named.

Knowledge of future contingents humanly impossible.

In the treatise "De Natura Deorum," where Cicero discusses the proof of a Divine Providence, he makes

Knowledge of future can

be given by  
God alone.

the Stoic rest his argument on the science of divination, as considering that to imply a kind of knowledge which presupposes a Divine ruler of the world, and which could not exist if it was governed only by chance. On the other hand, he represents his Epicurean as denying altogether the possibility of the truth of the popular belief, because it assumed the existence of a Supreme Being. Josephus, taking the same ground, but looking to the other side of the question, commends the study of the Jewish Scriptures to the heathens; for by them, he says, may be refuted the Epicurean doctrine, which would exclude a Divine Providence from the administration of human affairs. "For how," he asks, "is it possible that an event should be correspondent with a long precedent prediction, if things below happened by chance, and without any control or direction from above?" If future events are known only to God, Josephus might have added by way of corollary, the foreknowledge of such events on the part of man can have been communicated by God alone; and such communications, therefore, must be received as of Divine authority. We cannot doubt that there are many truths which men are unable to know by the natural channels of human knowledge; and of that kind are the doctrines of the Gospel. Supposing those doctrines to be true, we may, I think, with some confidence venture to affirm, that consistently with the freedom of the human will, and with the present principles of the human understanding, mankind originally could not have known them to have been from *God*, except by means of some preparatory dispensation analogous to the proof which is embodied in the Jewish Scriptures. The reasons of this opinion are founded upon the fact,



that at the time when the doctrines of the Gospel were first preached, mankind could not certainly know them to be of Divine authority by their natural powers of reasoning, but only by some *à priori* proof, such as could not be had from the nature of things. They could not be made to seem *antecedently* probable, except on a supposition of some previous supernatural communication analogous to prophetic inspiration.

Having prefaced these few remarks on the general subject, I shall now say a few words upon Prophecy in its particular bearings.

And let me first mention among the most important characteristics of this proof, as we find it in the Old Testament, that it stands evidently clear of all suspicion of fraud or *contrivance* of any sort. If the subject of the prophecy be some event over which human agents can exercise no control, such a supposition is excluded, even where the event is to happen within the lifetime of those to whom the prediction was delivered; but if the prediction was made many generations before the time of its fulfilment, the notion of collusion becomes impossible. For collusion is the first suspicion which occurs to the mind in the case of any other proffered miracle; but, in the case of proof from prediction, this particular ground of disbelief is, of course, shut out. Other miracles are, as it were, each, but units, so that a proof, by these satisfactorily constituted, is one which can be formed only by a process of addition; but predictive proof may be combined into a regular *scheme*; so that the force of the evidence, as well as the extent, both of time and place, over which the knowledge of it may be spread, may, without any diminution of its influence, be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

Prophecy a  
completed  
miracle.

One great event predicted, might have happened by chance.

Let us suppose, for example, some great event in history to have been clearly predicted; one which no concerted efforts of mankind could possibly have brought to pass, and the causes of which were so complicated, and so remotely connected with each other, both in time as well as place, that the supposition of its having been foreseen by human wisdom is made impossible. The case is readily imagined; for most historical events are of this description. Unless, then, the previous knowledge of this event was communicated to mankind in some miraculous manner, we must of necessity conclude that it happened by chance, and was the result of one of those blind coincidences which sometimes happen, no one can tell how or why.

Not so, however, with a connected series bearing on one event,

Put the case, however, that there was a *series* of such prophecies, by different persons and in different ages, but all announcing this same event, and each of them adding in succession some limitation, or supplying some circumstance, which had before been omitted; suppose, farther, that the authors of these successive prophecies had professed to write, not as of themselves, but from the illumination of God: would any one in such a case contend that the coincidence of the event with the predictions, as previously understood by mankind, was only accidental? But the improbability of such an explanation may be indefinitely increased, if necessary, until it becomes a mathematical impossibility.

much more on many events.

I have here been supposing the predictions to be multiplied, but the subject of them all to be one and the same event. But let the subject of the prophecy itself be manifold; and so put the case of one such great and leading fact, being connected with other

facts happening in different generations, or in different parts of the world; all emanating, as it would seem, from many distant points, and yet controlled by secret reference directed to one common centre; and so effectively co-operating in the accomplishment of some paramount and stated end as at length to have united the thoughts and hopes of mankind in one united feeling of definite expectation. If, now, one by one, and in due order, every particular local or subordinate event was regularly brought to pass, and the hopes and doubts and opinions of mankind were all left to terminate in the establishment of one great revelation: I ask, whether the most sceptical man that ever lived would be content to explain all this on the doctrine of chances? On the contrary, I think he would at once admit that in such a case as I have been imagining, it would demonstrate the certainty of a Divine testimony to the cause assigned for the event by irresistible evidence.

On this scheme of evidence, the greater the number of the events predicted, and the farther removed from each other in time and place, the stronger the proof becomes that their fulfilment was not effected by mere human concert. The more wonderful we suppose them to be, and the more contrary to the ordinary course of events, the less likely it is that the prediction was the fruit of chance. The greater the end to be accomplished, the more remote from the conjectures of reason, the more improbable, according to the principles of human knowledge,—so much the more credible and intelligible becomes that explanation which ascribes such unforeseen whole to God's providence.

In all that I have here been saying, my object has been to describe, as enounced in a general way, what

And the greater the number, the more supernatural the cause.

And so stood the Jewish

toward the  
Christian  
revelation.

appears to be the *theoretic*, rather than the historical, relation on which the Jewish dispensation stands towards the revelation of Christ. In fact, it is from a close examination of the principles of evidence on which the elder economy appears to have been providentially designed, that I have derived my remarks. But the hypothesis of this provisional economy, when viewed in the light, not of a bare antecedent, but of a preparation for the New Institution, will be further illustrated by imagining a supposed case, not of a communication from God, but generally of an embassy sent by the ruler of some empire to a dependent state; taking care in each particular to preserve the parallel between the two revelations. By substituting the words "God," and "Jesus Christ," and "mankind," and the "doctrines of the Gospel," and the "miracles of the New Testament," and the "prophecies of the Old," for the corresponding names of persons and things in the parallel but secular transactions I am about to propose, we shall, I think, easily conceive what the reasoning may have been on which the reception of Christianity, especially by the various adherents from Israel, was originally founded. For prophecy is not only the least ambiguous proof of a Divine interposition; it guarantees, in the case of a revelation, the *missive* itself or the letter of credit, as we may say, on which God, with His own hand, may write the subject-matter of His will. What I mean is, that not only may mankind, by means of prophecy, be prepared beforehand to receive a revelation announced from above; but they may also be prepared beforehand to distinguish at the proper time the very truths and doctrines which they shall there be summoned to receive.

No figure can more correctly represent the idea to be conveyed, as there is none more common with writers both of the Old and New Testaments, than that which teaches us to consider the Prophets and Apostles as ambassadors from God to mankind. In the third chapter of Exodus, where God commissions Moses to communicate to Pharaoh, as well as to the children of Israel, His command that the latter should depart from Egypt to sacrifice to Him in the wilderness, this character of an ambassador from heaven is distinctly attributed to him. St. Paul, in a like sense, calls himself an "ambassador, though in bonds." In the case of a revelation, it is a title which represents very accurately the functions which the first teachers of it have to perform; for they have no judgment or discretion of their own to exercise, their whole authority being derived from the instructions under which they act; and those instructions may refer as well to a religious as to a political communication.

Prophets  
and  
Apostles  
viewed as  
ambas-  
sadors.

Putting, then, out of view the subject-matter of the supposed commission, let us keep our mind simply on the idea here presented to us, of an embassy sent by the sovereign of some powerful empire to the subjects of a dependent state. And let us suppose the proposal of which he was the bearer to be of a kind not very probable in itself, and rendered still less so from the absence of the external marks of dignity usually seen in the person of an ambassador.

Case of an  
embassy  
somewhat  
in point.

Under such circumstances, it is evident that the court to whom he was sent would require, in the first place, some proof of his commission, and of his pretensions to the character which he assumed. For this purpose it would not be enough, any more than in the case of the Apostles, to bring general testimonials,

So that  
parties  
could  
look well  
into cre-  
dentials,



whatever might be their nature, to the honesty and respectability of his personal character; nor, supposing doubts to have been suggested as to his authority, would they be removed by offering to show the reasonableness, and usefulness, and importance of the propositions which he had to communicate; he would be required to bring the credibility of his powers under what Warburton, speaking of the miracles of Christ, calls "the broad seal and signature of his master," before the proposals to be made would be taken into consideration.

especially  
if purport  
surmised  
to be  
unwel-  
come.

We know that the mysterious and severe doctrines of the Gospel form a main cause of the opposition it has encountered. Well, then, let us suppose the proposals in question, instead of seeming reasonable and beneficial, to turn out on enquiry to be in the highest degree unpalatable, as tending to subvert all received opinions and interests; and not at all of a kind likely, in the apprehension of the people addressed, to have proceeded from the quarter to which they were ascribed:—it is plain, on this fresh supposition, that new matter of doubt arises.

So that  
after all,  
deception  
just con-  
ceivable.

In the first place, room is here still left for the suspicion of possible deception. The credentials may be supposititious, or have been improperly obtained; or, even if this were deemed unlikely, considering the character of his communication, yet the very person by whom they were conveyed might possibly have mistaken the true meaning of his instructions, and in the proposals delivered by him have spoken according to his own folly or fancy, rather than according to the real sentiments of him by whom he was sent, or the interests of those to whom he was accredited. At all events, it is just conceivable that not even the

seal and signature of the master would, by itself alone, in the circumstances here stated, shut out all doubt of its authenticity: the possibility of mistake or deception would not be infallibly excluded.

In this situation of the case, we shall, then, make a third supposition. That at the time when Christ appeared, an expectation prevailed, not only among the Jews, but among all the surrounding *nations*, of some Divine communication to mankind, is a well-known fact, to which it is sufficient, at the present moment, to have alluded. I shall hereafter have occasion to speak of it more at large. Let us therefore assume a similar fact, as part of the case we are imagining. With this view, suppose it to have been known beforehand and expected, that an ambassador of an unusual character, bearing a mysterious communication of some sort, was to be sent to the people we are here supposing. Or, to make the parallel more exact, let us put the case of a sealed document, to use an expression both of Isaiah and Daniel,<sup>1</sup> having preceded his arrival, of which every one had heard, but which was not to be opened until after his presentation. Here, then, at last would be an absolute test that would at once determine the true character of the pretended Divine messenger. If, upon opening the “seal of the book,” respecting whose authority we are supposing no question to be made, its contents should be found to agree, in all the important and in many circumstantial points, with his precedent report, the prudence, the justice, the propriety of the propositions would be open to examination perhaps; but no question would now remain about the authority on which the propositions were made, nor any doubt

In case of  
Jesus, the  
Prophets  
were the  
sealed  
document

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxix. 11. Dan. xii. 9.

either about the character of the bearer of them, or the fidelity with which he had fulfilled his instructions. Now, the only difference between this hypothesis, and that on which the Jewish Scripture pretends to have been designed, is just, in this point, the *authority* on which we are stating them to have been respectively founded. Assuming that to have been not only royal, but *Divine*, the prudence and justice and propriety of the propositions would no longer be questioned by any reflecting man.

when He  
was ex-  
pected ;  
that is to  
say, the  
Old Testa-  
ment.

Observe, then, that in the hypothesis on which the Apostles had to reason with the Jews—that the full powers of their Master were from God—the Old Testament held exactly the same place in the evidence for this as a sealed document in the case we have been speaking of. It is certain that at the period when our Saviour appeared, the Jews were expecting the Messiah. Moreover, an opinion prevailed universally among them, that the contents of the prophecies, either directly or indirectly, referred exclusively and definitely to the times and things that were to come to pass in His day or in the latter days. On these points there was at that moment no controversy, neither was there any as to the Divine character of the messenger whom they were to look for, or as to the full powers with which He was to be invested. All this was so much part of the popular belief that the absence of any glorious attributes, and the even marked obscurity of our Lord's outward appearance while on earth, were but the means taken, in the wisdom of God, for concealing His true character from the eyes of men, so long as this might be conducive to His purpose.

There  
were draw-  
backs, but

many

His resurrection from the grave and ascension into

heaven, followed, as these events were, by the shower of miraculous gifts vouchsafed to the followers of Christ, probabilities made for His case. began to let light in upon their understandings; but still there was at least a possibility of error. The message communicated to mankind was found an unwelcome one; in the highest degree improbable; overthrowing every previous imagination, and in other respects unpalatable to the pride of human reason.

But the Apostles appealed to the Old Testament,—In this case, the Apostles opened the sealed document, to the sealed document. They compared the several marks of the promised Messiah with the life and history of Jesus Christ. His nation; the place of His birth; the tribe and family from which He was to come; the time of His appearing; the treatment He experienced; His personal character and deportment; the miracles He had wrought;—all these they find agreeing. Looking still farther backwards, they would find, folded up, but under the same seal, and now concealed under types and figurative prophecies, the very doctrinal propositions which the preachers had already been instructed to communicate. Then was plainly which made things clear. to be deciphered the reason of the Lord's sufferings and passion with that of numberless allusions in His teaching, which, misunderstood at the time, were then recalled to their recollection, and became clear to their understanding, as the needed explanation of the new situation.

There is no controversy here, for I now am only This was the point, and endeavouring to state what appears to have been the hypothesis on which the Apostles placed the argument. That which the Jews denied was not the legitimacy of the hypothesis, that the Messiah's advent would be accredited from the Prophets, the point at which they joined issue with the Apostles was, whether

Jesus of Nazareth was the very Messiah ? and whether the doctrines, also, which the Apostles announced, on His authority, were or were not the same doctrines as had been hidden under the types and shadows of the Old Testament ?

*Time, as we now see, has demonstrated the affirmative by the event.*

*Time*, the only infallible interpreter of prophecy, has now for ever determined this question in the affirmative. Such, at least, is the conviction of Christians. For the prophecies have now found their completion in the success of the Gospel, and its final establishment in the belief of mankind.

But this success, which is now the peremptory and only regular proof, was plainly not a topic which could be appealed to in the time of the Apostles, or in the early days before the religious regime which they then announced had been by any considerable number received.



## CHAPTER IV.

### ON PROPHECY AS INTERPRETED BY THE JEWS.

Obscurity of Jewish prophecy—Its sense determined by Jewish Church interpretation from Jewish authors.

THE obvious fault which is found with a large number of the Scripture prophecies, is the vague and indeterminate language in which sometimes the subject-matter, sometimes the prediction itself, is couched. In the case of the pretended heathen oracles, their amphibolical obscurity was a matter of proverbial observation: it was a saying of Aristotle that *oracle-mongers never define*: οἱ χρησμολόγοι οὐ προορίζονται πότε. In truth, it is a difficulty not peculiar to false prophecies, but in some degree is almost inherent in the very nature of such evidence itself.

When the subject of a prophecy is some specific *event* only, such as was the destruction of Babylon, or the time of the sojourning of the people of Israel in Egypt, there is nothing to hinder the language from being plain and unambiguous; but unless the scope of the prediction be not the apparition of a momentous personality, but simply a matter of fact, or something equally determinate, a certain degree of verbal obscurity can hardly be avoided. How, for instance, in the case of the letter of the Old Testament, was the *person* of Christ to be so distinguished as

So-called ambiguity of the prophecies

unavoidable, except in matter of mere fact,

as, e.g. in case of person of

Christ, or  
doctrines.

that His office and character might be immediately known? And still more, how were the profound truths or propositions intended to be revealed, to be foretold in such sort as that, when revealed, no doubt should exist as to their Divine authority?

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then, the  
immemo-  
rial con-  
struction  
put before-  
hand on  
obscure  
places?

Accordingly, I do not mean to say that the prophecies of the Old Testament are all and each of them, if separately weighed and examined, so clearly worded as never to admit of any grammatical diversity of construction; far from it. But this only increases the difficulty of explaining how it came to pass that an exact and detailed tradition had existed in the Jewish Church, apparently from time immemorial, both as to the general application of the prophetic parts of Scripture, and also as to the particular meaning, also, of sundry detached passages; while, point by point, this traditional interpretation came to be actually realized.

So no  
doubt at  
all, at that  
time, that  
they  
pointed to  
Messiah;  
only,  
whether  
to Jesus?

It is common to hear much fault found with the manner in which passages from the Old Testament are applied by the writers of the New. Sometimes their interpretations are said to be forced; sometimes they are accused of having mistaken the sense; and in many instances of having considered expressions and allusions as prophetic, which, it is said, are not stamped with any such character. Much learning has often been shown in vindicating the Apostles from these charges; but the proper explanation is to be found, not in the critical exposition of the passages, but in that which is no more than an historical statement; namely, that, with the exception of certain prophecies which are of an exceptional kind, which I shall hereafter discuss,—in no instance, that I am aware of, do the Apostles ever apply to Jesus Christ

any passages from the Old Testament, which had not been regarded as prophetical by the Jews of their own day, and had been so regarded long before ; and which moreover, had always been referred, in the synagogues, to the Messiah. Whatever difference of opinion may now exist on this point between Jews and Christians has arisen since the introduction of Christianity. At the time when it appeared, there was no controversy as to the meaning of the several passages which the Apostles adduced, but only as to the reasons which they assigned for applying that meaning to Jesus of Nazareth.

This, I think, is evident upon the very face of the narrative parts of the New Testament, no less than in every one of the Apostolic Epistles. Not a hint is to be found in the former of any contradiction having been offered to Jesus, or afterwards to the Apostles, as having misapplied the Scriptures ; and with respect to the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles, it will be seen, upon examination, that unless we suppose an agreement of opinion up to a certain point between the writers and their opponents, in respect of the general quotations alleged by the former, their arguments will not have common sense. While, on the other hand, the very absence of all such discussion, and the total silence as to any doubt or contrariety of interpretation, may seem to furnish as strong a presumption as a negative inference can do, that in the premises at least, from which either party reasoned, no disagreement existed, or could exist.

But we are not left to merely negative proof of this, nor to the evidence of writings which have been composed by Christians. There are still in existence Jewish documents, about whose authenticity no question has

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New Tes-  
tament,  
*passim*.

Positive  
proof, also,  
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of Jews,

been ever raised on any side, which remove all uncertainty as to the belief of the Jews, at the time when Christianity first appeared, on the points then at issue.

especially  
those be-  
fore last  
dispersion.

The Jewish writers, or perhaps, I should rather say, such writings as are now in our possession, may be classed under two heads: those which were written before, and those which have been written since the destruction of Jerusalem. The latter, though often valuable for explaining the text of the Bible, do not possess the same importance in the determination of points of controversy turning upon the original sense of the prophecies. The question between us and the Jews is not, what does Maimonides say, or Joseph Albo, or Kimchi, or Abarbanel, whose opinions have been often guided in a great measure by a desire to oppose the Christian interpretation; but what, in each instance, was *the interpretation current in the synagogue in the age of the Apostles*. The change which has been effected in the opinions obtaining among the Jews by the establishment of the Gospel is plainly marked; so that whenever we find two senses of any passage, one of which is more, and the other less favourable to the Christian scheme, it may commonly be concluded that the former is the ancient, and the latter the modern interpretation.

These last  
show same  
sense with  
that given  
by Apostles.

Omitting all notice, then, of the last, and attending only to the ancient exposition, it may, I think, be laid down as a general rule, to which there are not more than five or six exceptions (and they admitting of explanation), that the sense which was put upon the several prophecies quoted by the Apostles was the same as had been put upon them by the Jewish people in general, as was then taught in their synagogues.

None,

Except the Targums, or Chaldee Paraphrases of

Onkelos on the Pentateuch, and Jonathan on the Prophets, there are no strictly Jewish writings extant, the composition of which is certainly known to have been so early as the Christian epoch. Though the traditions which have been collected in the Mischna belong themselves, for the most part, to a very much earlier date, yet the compilation of them was made in the second century. The commentary on the Mischna, or, as it is called, the Gemara, belongs to a much later period; and the contents of it, like those of the Mischna itself, are of various ages: some before Christ, and some as late as the fifth and sixth centuries.

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Targums  
before  
siege.

Mischna.

Gemara.

In addition to these sources of information respecting the traditional opinions of the ancient synagogue, are the Rabbinical commentaries on the several books of the Old Testament, called "*Libri Midraschici*." The authors of these books are supposed to have lived, some of them before Christ, and others successively in the second, and third, and fourth centuries.

Midrashtic  
books.

But next to the Targums themselves, the work most important to our present purpose is the *Sepher Sohar*, or "*Liber Splendoris*," ascribed to the great Rabbi Simeon Ben Jochai, who flourished in the generation immediately following the Apostolic age. The author was important enough to have been a mark for persecution under Hadrian, in his own lifetime, in Barcocheba's revolt, and his writings remained in the comparative obscurity of the Palestinian schools for several centuries; but these afterwards won their way among the Jews of profounder learning, and now constitute the basis of the theological Cabala. If we may believe Schoettgen, from whom my information is chiefly drawn, R. Simeon refers to the Messiah, not only all the passages of the Old Testament which were so

Sohar.



applied by the Apostles, but numberless other passages to which they do not advert ; and so nearly do his own deductions from the Jewish Scriptures approach to the sense ascribed to them by the Apostles, that the controversy would seem not so much to regard the meaning of the prophecies, as the question whether that meaning was or was not rightly applied to Jesus of Nazareth. So entirely was this the case, that Schoettgen came to the conclusion that the author of the *Sohar*, though outwardly a Jew, must in his secret mind have been a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

All favour-  
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mony to be  
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genuine.

Whatever reliance ought to be placed on the testimony of these several authorities in the instances where it presses against the Christians, yet the most scrupulous weigher of evidence may dismiss all jealousy from his mind, whenever the evidence is in their favour. The Jews, no doubt, have in numerous cases thrown aside the testimony of ancient witnesses ; but it may be questioned whether any instance can be produced of their having knowingly done so, except in this case. To suppose that they would, under any circumstances, depart from the tradition, where to do so would open a door to arguments in favour of Christianity, is as contrary to probability as any supposition that we could name. “Whoever,” says R. Simeon (quoted by Schoettgen), “shall propose any interpretations of the word, except such as he has heard from the mouth of the Rabbins, him shall the holy, blessed God punish in the world to come : and when his soul shall seek to enter into its habitation, they shall cause him to be thrust forth from among the living.”

For since

Certainly the spirit of this admonition has been

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Note A, at end of chapter.

transgressed in various instances by the Jews, in silently dropping many doctrines and traditions of their Church which afforded a handle to their adversaries; but I question whether any case can be mentioned, from the days of Christ to the present, in which an opinion has been engrafted upon their ancient traditions, the tendency of which was to *confirm* the truth of the Gospel. I shall not here enter upon a critical examination of any particular prophecies; it is sufficient for all the purposes I have in view to show that the sense put upon them by the writers of the New Testament is the same as was then put upon them by the Jewish Church; that is, not a sense of their own, but one which, whether agreeable to the canons of criticism or not, was at that time not disputed.

The proofs of this fact come now to be considered. The first authority is that of the Targums. This word signifies nearly the same as we mean by the word Paraphrase, and denotes not, indeed, a mere grammatical version, but a running translation, *ad populum*, of the immediately intended sense. The Chaldee Paraphrases are supposed to have had their origin in the synagogues so widely established after the return from Babylon, when the Hebrew ceased to be a vernacular tongue, and was not understood, except by the priests and Levites.<sup>1</sup> When the Law, therefore, was read in the synagogue after the restoration of the Jews, an interpreter became necessary,

<sup>1</sup> These paraphrastic comments were, in pursuance of Jewish manners, not at the beginning committed to writing; but synagogues, or, as we might say, chapels, multiplying, competent paraphrasts, or ministers of sufficient education, were not found to serve them in equal number in remoter quarters, and so to meet this need, and promote uniformity, these Targums were adopted, and practically sanctioned, as a sort of Authorized Version.—ED.

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The two  
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whose duty was to translate aloud, in Babylonian or Chaldee, for the people, the words which the priest had first recited in the original Hebrew. This was done, verse by verse, from the beginning to the end of each section; at first extempore, but afterwards the interpretations were committed to writing, and constitute the Targums now in the possession of the Jews. They are, for the most part, nearly literal, except that in such passages of Hebrew origin, where an allusion to the Messiah is supposable only, in the Chaldee Paraphrase the fact is expressly indicated.

Not so  
with  
Talmudic  
and other  
traditions,

Farther than this one continuous reference to Messiah, the Targums—as meant alone for reading in public worship—convey no information concerning the current opinions of the ancient synagogue, or schools; for this knowledge we must consult the other writings of the Jews, which I just now mentioned. These are filled exclusively with Rabbinical traditions, most of them of little intrinsic value, but often throwing important light upon the question at present before us. Any knowledge I have of them is entirely at second-hand; but the reader will find all the information he requires in the works of Lightfoot and of Schoettgen, and especially of the latter. If to these he will add the “*Pugio Fidei*”<sup>1</sup> of Raymundus Martini, he will be able to instruct himself very fully as to the opinions held by the ancient Jews respecting the proper interpretation of the several prophecies referred to Christ by the Apostles. Every statement

<sup>1</sup> “*Pugio fidei adversus mauros et Judæos*,” the great repertory of Raymond Martini, Spanish Dominican, A.D. 1250–1286, devoted to missions among Jews, with whom he held many public disputations. The object of this vast repertory was to evince the agreement of the *genuine* Rabbinical tradition, which he was the first to explore, with the Christian faith as known in the time of this intelligent and laborious writer.—ED.

made in these works is supported by references in the words of the original author; and the reader will seldom meet with any instances in which the quotations do not bear out the conclusions drawn from them.

In order to keep the proofs within a reasonable compass, it will be better if we confine them to a fixed part of the Old Testament. By far the largest number of the passages alleged by the writers of the New Testament are from Isaiah and the Psalms. Let us then take these two books only, and examine, one by one, every passage quoted from them as applicable to Christ.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards let us turn to Schoettgen, or the "*Pugio Fidei*," to see in each case whether the same passages were referred by the ancient synagogue to the Messiah. Whenever this shall appear to be the case, it will be plain that the use made of them by the Apostles was agreeable to the tradition of the elders, and not a private interpretation of their own. I find only ten of the Psalms to which any allusion is made in the New Testament, and about twenty-three passages from the same book quoted by the Apostles, and referred to Christ; and if we may trust to the references given by Schoettgen and Raymundus Martini, they are all of them, either generally or particularly, so applied in the Targums or old Rabbinical writers.

Ps. ii. 1, 2. 6. 8, quoted Acts iv. 25. 28; xiii. 33. Referred to the Messiah in Melchita, fol. 3, 3. Sohar. Gen. Midrash. Tehillim.

<sup>1</sup> Though most important references, to other passages also of the Prophets, and that not in the allusive or adventitious sense, always in use but never authoritative, but in *direct* application, are found in the Talmud, and books of venerated authority. See the learned "*Harmonie de l'Église et de la Synagogue*," by Chev. Drach, a consummate Talmudist, and apparently competent cabalist, Paris, 2 vols., 1844.—Ed.

Ps. viii. 4, 6, quoted Heb. ii. 6. 9. Referred to the Messiah in Tikkune Sohar. c. 70.

Ps. xvi. 8, 11, quoted Acts ii. 25. 32. Referred to the Messiah in Bereschith rabba, sect. 88.

Ps. xxii. 1. 8. 16. 18, quoted Matt. xxvii. 46. Referred to the Messiah in Midrash. Tehillim. Pesikta Rabbathi in Talkut Simeoni. fol. 56. 4. Sohar. Numer. fol. 100.

Ps. xl. 6. 8, quoted Heb. x. 5. 10. Referred to the Messiah in Midrash. Ruth, fol. 43. 3, 4.

Ps. xlv. 1. 7, quoted Heb. i. 8, 9. Rom. ix. 5. Referred to the Messiah in Targum. Sohar; and also by the modern Jewish commentators.

Ps. lxviii. 18, 19, quoted Ephes. iv. 8. Referred to the Messiah by R. Obadja Haggæon, cited by Cartwright. Schemoth rabba, sect. 35.

Ps. lxix. 21, quoted Matt. xxvii. 34. 48—Gall and vinegar given to Christ to drink. I have found no Jewish authority for the application of this particular fact to the Messiah, either in Schoettgen or the “Pugio Fidei;” but the Psalm itself is applied to Him generally by several writers quoted by Martini.

Ps. cx. 1. 4, quoted Heb. v. 5, 6; vi. 19, 20. Compare Sohar. Gen. fol. 35. Sohar. Num. fol. 99. Midrash. Tehillim ad loc. Targum. Sohar. chadash, fol. 42. Gen. fol. 42. 29.

Ps. cxviii. 22, 23. Compare Sohar. Gen. fol. 118. Idem Numer. fol. 86, *et passim*.

I have specified these several texts, together with the places of the New Testament and of the Rabbinical writers in which they are severally referred to. But we are not to conclude that the Psalms and passages here quoted are the only ones so explained by the synagogue. Many places in every part of Scrip-



ture are applied to the times of the Messiah by the ancient Jewish Church which are not noticed in the Apostolical writings. A principle of interpretation adopted by the Targumists would appear to have been, that whenever expressions were found in the Hagiographa or other prophetic writings, conveying a meaning too high and comprehensive to admit of an historical application to known persons or things, such expressions ought to be referred to the Messiah or His kingdom. As to double senses, I am not aware of any sound authority for the existence of such a notion in the Jewish commentators. Their rule would seem to have been founded on the opposite supposition: that no prophecy could have two senses; and therefore when the words of the inspired writer, taken literally, afforded no satisfactory meaning, it was a proof that they were to be understood prophetically. The idea of a double sense implies an *ex post facto* interpretation not likely to have occurred to the minds either of Jews or Christians before the preaching of the Gospel. Actions and things, viewed as *types*, do involve the supposition of a double sense; but there is some difficulty in comprehending clearly what is the meaning, or could have been the design, of a double *prophecy*.<sup>1</sup> But to return to the subject more immediately before us.

scure passages referred to Messiah or His kingdom.

Of the sixty-six chapters which compose the Book

<sup>1</sup> No such thing, doubtless, as a double prophecy in this sense, but there is possibility for *two* predictions within one *piece*, each distinct in its own topic, of which the first, or minor, should serve implicitly, and after the peculiar economy prevailing in Israel, as the *sign* or guarantee to cotemporaries of the remote—yet always analogous—accomplishment of the second; the sign thus would serve, in the interim, as a word to the “wise;” the object of the *prophecy* proper is but one, the antecedent serving only as a *sign* of it. *Vide* Note B, at end of chapter.

of Isaiah, all, except fifteen, are referred by one Jewish writing or another to the "times" of the Messiah, as His kingdom is commonly designated; but in the New Testament, I think, there are not quotations from more than sixteen or seventeen.

Isaiah.

Isa. ii. 1. 5. Conversion of the Gentiles. John x. 16. Acts xxviii. 28. These passages are applied to the Messiah in the Targum, and generally by Jewish commentators, both ancient and recent.

Isa. vii. 14. The miraculous birth of Christ. "*Hoc caput*," says Schoettgen, "*Judæi antiquiores, ex inscitâ, juniores vero, ex malitiâ neglexerunt.*" I shall take occasion, in the following chapter, to offer some remarks upon this important prophecy, which will, I hope, both explain the ignorance of the ancient Jews, and vindicate the present from the charge here preferred by Schoettgen; but in the mean time, it is sufficient to say, that this prophecy stands out almost singly, as one which the Apostles have applied to Christ on their own authority.

Isa. viii. 13, 14. Christ, a stone of stumbling. Rom. ix. 33; 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Applied to the Messiah in Sanhedrim, fol. 38. Breschith rabba, sect. 42. fol. 40.

Isa. ix. "Unto us a child is born." This very important prophecy is referred to the Messiah in the Targum; and it is generally so understood by Christians. Nevertheless, I cannot satisfy myself that any allusion to it is to be found in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

Isa. xviii. 16. Christ, the chief corner-stone. 1 Pet. ii. 3. 6. Applied to the Messiah in Sanhedrim, fol

<sup>1</sup> "*Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Lord Messiah*"? See also on Isa. ix. 6. the Targum, with illustrations, in the "*Harmonie de l'Eglise et de la Synagogue*," by the learned Talmudist, M. Drach,—a treasure of such lore.—Ed.

98. 1. Talkut Simeoni, i. fol. 49. 3. Breschith Kezara citante Raymundo Martini in "Pug. Fid." ii. 4. p. 313.

Isa. xxx. 3, 4. 15. Miracles of the Gospel and effusion of the Spirit. Acts ii. 4. Rom. xi. 18. Compare Tanchuma, fol. 1, 2. Debarim rabba, sect. 6. fol. 258. 2. Sohar, chadash, fol. 89. 3.

Isa. xxxi. Times of the Messiah. New Testament *passim*. See Pesikta rabbathi, fol. 29. 3. Tanchuma. Talkut Simeoni, i. fol. 157. 1. Sohar. Exod. fol. 34. col. 134.

Isa. xl. John the forerunner of Christ. This chapter is referred to the Messiah by the present Jews, as well as by the ancient. See Kimchi. Aben Esra. Pesikta in Talkut Simeoni, ii. fol. 49. 1, as quoted by Schoettgen *in loco*.

Isa. xlii. 1. 7. 16. New Testament *passim*. Applied to Christ in the Targum, and by all the present Jews.

Isa. liii. The whole chapter is referred explicitly to the Messiah<sup>1</sup> in the New Testament, as it also is from lii. 13. 16 to end of liii. in the Targum, to Messiah, or to Israel in time of Messiah; and in the Sohar as well, in a profound sense.

Isa. lv. 1. 5. Christ, the living water. John iv. 10. 14. Schoettgen quotes from Galatinus, Breschith rabba ad Genes. xlix. 14; but the passage is not found, he tells us, in the editions which he has consulted.

Isa. lx. Glory of Christ's kingdom. New Testament *passim*. So applied in the Targum, and by the ancient Jewish Church *passim*.

Isa. lxi. Christ anointed by the Spirit. Luke iv. 16. Matt. iii. 16, 17. This chapter is referred to the Messiah by the modern Jewish commentators, as well as the ancient.

<sup>1</sup> See Note C at end of chapter.

Targums  
the highest  
authority ;  
and all the  
*literal* or  
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marks or  
“ notes ”  
claimed  
for Jesus  
are found  
in Tar-  
gums.

If it would not be tedious, it would be a task of no difficulty, to go through the remaining passages quoted from the Old Testament by the Apostles, in confirmation of Christ's Divine commission. They are, I believe, not more than between twenty and thirty ; and with the single exception of Job xix. 25 (about which the Jews, both of the present and of former times are silent), in every instance the authority of the ancient synagogue may be produced, in confirmation of the interpretation the Apostles affixed.

With respect to the more important of the prophecies which they allege:—all those, that is to say, which the Jews considered as the “ terms ” by which the *person* of the Messiah would be known, and from which the *time*, beyond which He was not to be looked for, was to be determined:—we can produce the authority of the Targums in favour of the Christian interpretation. And in the present question this is the highest of all authorities ; because these books were known to the people at large, not in Palestine only, but in the wide Diaspora, and in fact were the channels through which all their knowledge of the original Scriptures was derived. Daniel, in his prophecy of the seventy weeks, refers by *name* to the Messiah. In fact it was *this* prophecy that founded the exclusive and popular use of the word as a personal designation. Gen. iii. 15 ; Numb. xxiv. 17 ; Haggai ii. 7. 9 ; Mal. iii. 1 ; Micah v. 2 ; Zech. ix. 9 ; are likewise referred to Him in the same manner, by all authorities, ancient and modern.

Such the  
previous  
Jewish  
judgment,  
whether  
right or  
wrong,

It is not necessary to enter into any controversy in this part of the argument, for it is but a matter of fact:—that the construction put upon the prophecies by both parties was identical: the difference between

them, not regarding at all the reality or general meaning of the prophecies adduced by the Apostles, but only the proof of their having been fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

The preceding remarks have been built upon this general rule; but it is not to be dissembled that important exceptions to it may be produced. The Apostles also *quote* the Old Testament to show, that Christ was to be born of a virgin;—*virgo prius ac posterius*;—that He was to rise from the dead; that He was to drink gall and vinegar; that His garments were to be parted; that He was to be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. These and some other facts are adduced by the Apostles as answers to prophecies; and some of them are of much importance. I am, however, in doubt whether passages just recorded were referred to the Messiah by the ancient Jewish Church; yet, if unexplained, they seem sufficient in number to invalidate the general proposition which I have ventured to lay down. But when exceptions are founded upon specific reasons, instead of overturning, they are found, on the contrary, to confirm the rule; and this, I think, will be seen to be true in the instance before us. For, unless I mistake, such reasons can be given in the case of every one of them, *why* they were withdrawn from the general rule, as will go far to show that in the Old Testament there are to be found all the marks of a concerted scheme, which is not to be understood except by keeping in our view the *design* to which the prophecies were subservient.<sup>1</sup>

with one  
or two ex-  
ceptions  
which con-  
firm the  
rule.

<sup>1</sup> As it was with the notion of the violent death—or *death* in any case—of the Messiah, which was no part, at least, of popular belief. For it was signified by Himself to the Twelve alone, and that not long before the catastrophe, and even *they* could make nothing of the communication. But, with this, it is also plain



that none of the other passages of the Old Testament which are now seen to be, as it were, mere *dependencies* of this tragical crisis, could have been beforehand consciously referred to Messiah; or, at least, proposed to the average congregation as such, which was the usage of the Targum. For if it were so with the death, thus also, of course, must it have been with the notion of His *personal resurrection*, in which a previous decease is necessarily implied. The exception, however, does but confirm the rule. For by so reappearing Jesus made good His *own* already notorious prophecy and challenge—since this was brought forward after His death by His enemies themselves. This great fact of the resurrection could therefore be confronted on the spot with the notice just fallen from His own lips, for Jesus had been in this case His own Prophet. In the pregnant words of Coleridge, He had been compelled to become, in this instance also, His own Elias. See St. Ignatius on those three points of His birth, death, resurrection.—Ed.

#### NOTE A.

“CABALISTS AND PLATONISTS,” p. 182.

This view of the Zohar, suggested by Schoettgen, is probably without due ground. For the superior schools, Hebrew as well as Hellenic, so soon as the mounting flood of a movement, so derided at its birth from the quality of its earlier adherents, was felt to touch the philosophic feet, were led by instinctive concert to shut the dangerous attraction out of sight by a conspiracy of silence; though simple silence was by no means the measure of their sentiments. Obligated, however, to come nearer to the street, they were fain to bring under profane glare theorems hitherto dimly sighted rather than thought out even among their own *élite*. It had become evident, indeed, to the discomfiture of a too exclusive complacence, that it was the very vulgarization of such exalted themes among the unlettered but inwardly purified many—and till recent centuries the average of the upper ranks were scarcely more *lettered* than those below—which had made the fortune of the new “impiety.” So much at least may be gathered from the masters themselves of the Oral Law as to the cause of the late and reluctant transfer not of the Cabala only, but also of the Mischna, and Gemara, or Talmud, to paper. This was done in order to hold together ranks demoralized and left without a centre in face of an incalculable invasion from Hellenized Christianity, or from “Edom,” or “the kingdom of iniquity,” with all which names the synagogue identified, while it disguised, the fourth idolatrous or Roman empire: just as also the synagogue itself, before the fall of Jerusalem, was on the part

of the first Christians, by way of mystical or furtive sobriquet, spoken of as "Babylon," or "Egypt."

It seems doubtful whether Christianity is directly alluded to in the Zohar, at least in the state in which we now have this recondite book. Certain affinities with doctrines afterwards common in Christianity would seem to have existed in the profounder tradition of the more ancient Hebrew church, such, for instance, as that of Reversibility; but there seems no real ground for the surmise of any mental adhesion, or even sympathy, on the part of the cabalists with the Gospel cause.

So it also was with that renewed activity of the great eclectic school which, under the auspices of Homer and Plato—the Gospels, and, as it were, the Epistles of the new paganism—arose at about the same period of the third century. It is difficult, indeed, to mistake the influence really exerted by the Christian lore and institutions on this development, both in the more open treatment of abstruser matter, and in polemical tactique, so to speak. This lasted, too, from the day of the more unworldly and profound Plotinus, to the ill-starred result of the association of savants, which was never more than a school, and which in its naive complacency, could never till the last conceive anything better or higher. Nor does one well conceive how the good sages could; since for thinkers so eminent, as were some few of these—even if we are to include among such the prematurely captured and turbid spirit of the youthful Julian, whose combinations they had guided to so unhappy a result—the excuse, if any, must be pleaded from the entire, and seemingly inevitable failure on their part, to touch, as far as I can see, or even surmise, the secret of the nerve or spring of the Christian force or influence. This, as already planted by the Divine Master, and recorded by St. John, is first exhibited, to *us* at least, in the operation and writings of the Apostle Paul, its earliest and, perhaps, its definitive doctor and expositor. Hence the coarse but infelicitous attempt of certain moderns to discredit that great genius, and, by ascription of motives which do but give their own moral measure, to detach the great name of Paul, and ruin the value of his witness to the original facts.

This word of order, this "seed," as it were, of renewed human thought, was the great word *παλιγγενεσία*. This, especially as realized in the "Perfect," was the ultimate execution, in the individual life at least, of the "crushing of the serpent's head." The trader, little more cultured, perhaps, than the artisan who wrought statuettes for Diana, the poor mechanic, or poor mortals even of quite disorganized life, were instructed by Paul, and no doubt by numerous others, that his individual soul counted as one, and yet no more, in the eye of his supreme Creator. He would know that by initiation into a sphere of unsuspected solemnities, he would be delivered from

apprehensions that had driven the eminent Lucretius into materialism; that he would enter for the first time into full possession of himself; or, in rarer cases of heroic effort or of divine vocation—as described by the sad and profound poet who died on the threshold of the great illumination—come to know the last word of mysteries thought communicable to the very few; for so he might be re-united in even sensible wise to the Origin of his existence.

Τέρμα δὲ μοι Θεὸς ἔστι νοούμενος οὐκετ' ἐσώπτηρ,

says a high and humble Christian. So, after a severe discipline of darkness, Henry More came to see,

“I came from Heaven, am an immortal thought  
Of God, oh joy, and shall to Heaven return.”

Or, a humble French gentleman, a century later, “Solomon had seen what is under the sun. I know one who has seen more, and tells no lie—that which is *above* the sun; yet that some one gives no glory to himself.”

A consummate preparation in somewhat ascetic Hebrew discipline, completed by the illumination of Gospel experience, thus obtaining in so great a soul, enabled Paul to lead the poor proletarian, as we speak, not only to the appeasement of salutary alarm from an awakened conscience to peace in clean living, to self-control, to chastity, but even, in certain chosen cases, to a sublimer point than any conceived by the fastidious platonist. This, too, was, by an initiation no more recondite or exclusive than the moral, but indispensable—and here was, and still is, the great scandal—practice of chastity, of charity and unreserved surrender to the law of his Creator now notified even to corporeal senses in the person of the WORD MADE FLESH.

Great things escape from platonic writers, and even touching things from the half divine Plotinus, to whose good account it may, I hope, be reckoned to have almost organized the philosophic terminology of the Trinal-Unity, and to have contributed, as the main human precondition to the formation of an Augustine; but such things were, with these men, at best but *arcana*, importing mental aptitudes attainable only by one who might have passed through the discipline of the quadrivium and the trivium, an ascetic life, much acquaintance with philosophic systems, and intense discursive contemplation. That innumerable unlettered persons—and all but the few were *unlettered*, however nurtured in polite and civil traditions—should land at a bound, and often drop far beyond, was a thing never fairly taken in by curious and eclectic sages, masters themselves of so much moral wisdom and prudence.

Saul of Tarsus was obviously a consummate Rabbi; and, though probably no initiate, yet well acquainted with the

import also of the Cabala, as any complete teacher may now be with that of the so-called Mystic Theology. Doubtless, also, he was cognizant of the leading positions of the philosophic schools. Probably, also, as it was with Tauler long after, he could dissert with ease on things superior; and yet, at the top of his progress, it was brought home to him by the stroke of the great illumination, that he was but embarked, like the son of Kish, on a fool's errand.

Thus was his life broken in two. The great strides had only taken him further out of the way, and he was shown to himself to have been, after all, but a simpleton by the infusion of a wisdom that extinguished all mundane light. And so, with Paul, the chief thing—as doubtless he inculcated on the first philosopher captured at Athens—was to make for the moment *tabula rasa* of all that seemed to set him so far above the simple. Ἀπλῶν ἐαυτὸν. To sit down among the simple. He would then, for the first time, know himself to be a wise man—nay, more, if such were his vocation—be wise with the transcendent wisdom of the diviner gnosis. The first step, however, with such was to acknowledge the man of humble life who had been executed at Jerusalem to be the true Lord of all, and His own Master in particular; and to adopt the unostentatious pattern of His life as the truest way to real illumination.

Paul himself, however equipped in profane culture, or with what the Hebrews called the sciences of Ishmael, and of far too large a mind not to be aware of the service which such attainments might render to the Gospel in their place, nay, freely using them on occasion himself, yet in this new way of “salvation”—for “salvation” was a new word or new notion with the Greeks at least—put all these into a subordinate place. Those things which he had not unreasonably looked upon as his peculiar advantages, which distinguished him from the vulgar, which promised a useful, or more than useful, career, these he had come to look upon, in comparison with the greater ones of which he had not yet so much as dreamed, as so much dust and refuse.

It was this, in the measure that it anywhere obtained, that made a gulf between what was called the “Barbarian philosophy” and that of the savant of Hellenic line. “Nothing,” said St. Paul, to the heathen enquirer, “can be really known as it ought to be known, or take its proper place in your thought, till the great question, now open, once for all be settled, of your own standing with your Creator. The first thing for any human being, to whom the case has been properly certified, is to tender his allegiance to that Divine Man who died on a gibbet that he had himself much better deserved, and after that to reproduce, in best manner he might, in his *own* consciousness, the process of which that life, so rendered, was a



symbol as well. Σταύρου λόγος, "The Lore of the Cross," said, later on, the profound Ignatius.

Thus did the school of Paul appeal to each comer one by one, and according to the measure of his susceptibility to those instructions of conscience that are found to lie below all acquired knowledge or discursive power, at the bottom of the soul of every intellectual creature, whether an Areopagite or a Magdalene. The open signification of the Divine Will was first brought, by appeal to right reason, and obtruded on the general mind by means of operative institutions provided for the administration of the new Word; but the mass of individual adherents did not, so much, as I imagine, enter into arguments of high matter with the enquiring neighbour, as simply recount their own experience. So said the poor man in the Gospel, when restored to sight, tormented with compromising questions, "Whether He be the Messiah I have little means of knowing; but one thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

So went forward, in order parallel with the public ministrations, the subjective side as well of the great propaganda. It prospered *occulto sicut arbor ævo*, under the serene survey of excellent savants, *certo certiores*, undermining the popular polytheisms, detaching here and there, not however without scandal, some highly accredited intelligence; so that it seemed to the philosophic sect, as has been intimated, not at all too soon for them to operate, under guise of a seemingly quite spontaneous development, the disdainful, yet really unintelligent counter-movement which, even with the resources of an Imperial zealot placed at their disposal, fell so flat to the ground.—ED.

#### NOTE B.

"THE 'DOUBLE' SENSE," p. 187.

A double sense, says our author, may be intelligible in case of types, but hardly of prophecy. It is well known that the term of "prophet," or "nabi," was by no means peculiar to Israel. The conception of Prophet or Seer, in general, was a declarer of the present behests of higher powers, or of the issue of some enterprise; so Croesus consulted the god at Delphi on the Persian war. Balak had recourse to Balaam, as also Ahab to Zedekiah and Micaiah on the expedition to Ramoth. Also Ahaz to Isaiah, when threatened by the combination of Samaria with Syria. Israel also was held to have a permanent oracle while the Shekinah rested on the ark. The difference was in these cases not in the conception but in the fact. The recognized prophetic order in Israel was in real relation with the Supreme or Divine order, not, as in other cases, if such were, with inferior powers. Whatever, however, was so delivered, either in Israel or among



the nations, had but one sense, so far as it had any, though true in the former case, usually false in the latter.

What, then, should have led able men to suppose a secondary sense in the case of "writings" deposited by the Prophets with Israel? This would seem to have arisen out of an unusual endowment or function superadded, in certain cases, to the more normal equipment which was but for present direction and moral admonition. "*Surely*," says Amos, "*the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the Prophets*" (iii. 7). In all ages God had elevated devoted men into *friends and Prophets*. Individual Israelites of ascetic training, already in relation with unseen powers that co-operate with the Supreme for the furtherance of His purpose, were, as we are informed, in some instances taken up into the more secret counsels of *Providence*, and charged with the entirely distinct and peculiar function or burthen of promulgating the remoter intentions or judgments of the Lord on Babylon, or on Tyre, but especially in regard to the future of Israel, as the instrument or *plant*, so to speak, especially reserved as the fulcrum of an operation in favour of the race at large.

Hence arose for Israel, far more even than for the nations outside, the need of the direction by a "true Prophet," often referred to in the later books of Nehemiah and of the Maccabees, for advice in present conjunctures, in order to prepare Israel, and through it, in a measure, the nations, for the more cosmopolitan service it was in training to render.

Lettered critics think to make a great point by decorating these sublime and ascetic persons, when driven to take the pen, as authors, as *litterati*, tribunes, journalists. They would, it is hinted, have perhaps been equal to us had their lot been permitted to fall in our own century. It is a truth, however, too little noticed, that though the Old World, and especially Palestine, swarmed with so-called seers or prophets, none of them have left behind any thing on paper, except a few commissioned from on High for Israel, and of these scarcely more than a dozen. But even these, however incredible it may be to our critical minds, were occupied with nothing so little as the splendid weeds with which our subaltern culture would bedizen men thus taken under supernatural conditions into Divine co-operation, and occupied with the preparation of humanity for the great redintegration of the future. For, as had been observed by an ancient thinker (Heracitus) even in the profaner order, "much and varied acquisition does little to feed the soul, whereas the Sibyl, uttering with frantic voice matter alarming, inartistic, unattractive, pierces, by Divine aid, through countless centuries."

But, not to quit the more positive point of view from which our treatise is written, how were such especial agents to gain credence for attributes, in this latter case so inconceivably tran-

scending any effort of natural calculation, or even of theurgic resource? If we are to credit you, it might be urged, with a knowledge of the future fortunes of our race so transcending all known human relations with the invisible, show at least some such proof of your acquaintance of the Divine Will which we can test for the immediate present. Now, it would seem that it was in compliance with such not unreasonable demands, that there was accorded to Israel this sort of duplicated prediction. On the eventful erection of the altar in Samaria, a "man of God" steps forth and declares that the day will come when that altar will be as publicly desecrated; and, as a sign that he did not speak without book, the hand put forth by Jeroboam was taken back withered. So was it with the *sign*, given by Isaiah to Ahaz, and by the same Prophet, by the recess of the shadow on the dial to Hezekiah, as pledge for his own recovery. But so much more especially, in the execution of what was the very reason for existence of Israel—its formation into a *basis* upon which the execution of a great plan for the race was at last to issue—was it with the *burthen* laid upon the charitable heart of good men who had put things secular under their feet, to denounce, from the little centre of Judæa, the approaching intervention or sudden blows of Providence upon the formidable nations in their environs. For this maintained alive the consciousness for Israel of its providential, but, at the same time, provisional existence, and was the guarantee for those good men who could never hope to verify it with their eyes, that the great mission, under whatever conditions, would also have its glorious accomplishment.

The double economy that was thus established by the peculiar conditions under which men, trained in mental and usually ascetic schools, were often developed as oracles in emergencies, but, in rarer cases, entrusted also with the vision of the inaccessible designs of Providence, gave, it may be apprehended, the occasion for what in writings—quite peculiar to those few—some have distinguished by the name of a *double sense*. It is probably true, as urged by our author, that there can be but one sense at the same moment, *i.e.* in the Prophet's *own* mind, of a genuine prediction, but it is quite possible withal that, in the provisional economy then obtaining, one piece of a production may enwrap two real and even analogous, but yet quite distinct disclosures—the first for present, the latter also, and mainly for future use. These, however, were not (as writers in their naïve preoccupation seem to suggest), sent at once for publication, for such methods were not in the manners of the day, but they were manifested to exceptional personages or received into archives. On such account the communications were mostly made in sibylline language. The "wise," however, would, as we now speak, read between the lines, and would there discern

intimations of events at hand in the *secular* order, but so particularized as to exhibit, on occasion, their own palpable execution.

But then that immediate effect which for the multitude was a quite sufficient instruction, was, for more reflective scrutiny, little more than the conventional *sign* or earnest of an accomplishment to be in the great *super-secular* order. For, in the sort of straits into which the Divine wisdom found itself reduced (through human blindness and the perversity of human wills), the notice of the simply temporal event was—by a sort of Divine *finesse*, if the word be allowed—found incorporated with terms analogous, indeed, but which were often found so strange, uncouth, and provocative of reflection—so plainly transcending the scope of any merely secular fact, that the wise could not but seek the abutment of the principal intention at a point lying far beyond. And that is all that was required. For so these secular predictions, while they secured their proper effect on the popular mind, have served the purpose of keeping ever open, in the minds of the reflective at least, the prospective accomplishment of the great cosmic plan. For “out of Zion was to go forth the *Law* and the *Word* of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

In such case, then, there would have existed in the mind of the *seer*—and certainly in the Mind that illuminated the *seer*—when composing such piece, no real confusion of two, but rather two, to the Prophet himself at least, obviously distinct previsions. Still, having regard to the quite exceptional conditions under which the great and final revelation was afterwards to be made and received—this last could not be as yet displayed to the vulgar mind with the same distinctness with which, for example, an event so intelligible as the immediate recovery of a prince from sickness, was guaranteed by the extraordinary physical fact of the retreat of a shadow on a dial.

The latest instance of such Divine economy would apparently be found in the prophecies which close the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. For these were found, even in the interim, to be significant to the intelligent, and yet palpable, at the abutment, even to the vulgar. And such, it would seem, was all that the Divine wisdom sought to effect. Though, perhaps, it might be said, in a true sense, that all the Prophets make together but one great prophecy; as, indeed, it has been said of that strange nationality itself, it was γένος Θεωρητικόν, as Philo often says, or *populus videns Deum*.

To take an instance in a prediction to which the inaccurate term, “double sense,” has been most commonly assigned. Supposing that the matter in the more immediate occupation of our Lord’s own mind and discourse on Olivet, had been, not (as would seem) the imminent fall of the great city, but the more remote case of the close of this temporal universe, or at least the apostasy and judgment of Christendom. In such case, He might conceivably

have added, "and this shall be a sign unto yourselves of this very generation; within less than forty years you will see the city lying now before you, beset with armies, and destroyed under the most calamitous circumstances, and at the same time the whole present church and state shall be utterly abolished. "Heaven and earth shall pass away." The Divine words, as recorded by St. Matthew, are thus resolvable, after the old Hebrew fashion, into more than one prediction of two analogous, indeed, but absolutely unconnected occurrences. What is more, they have, in fact, been always taken since to be two, though it might have served the purpose of a Divine economy to have them presented or preserved for the wise in one piece. So that, in fact, in no part of the Church, from those days, have the solemn words of Jesus been yet held to be exhausted, even by the astounding catastrophe which is probably but the inferior analogue of a far greater consummation.

Or, again, taking the destruction of Jerusalem itself as the matter more immediately on the Lord's mind, though still relatively remote, He had given a present sign or prelude to this event, in the curse pronounced on the fruitless but too luxuriant fig tree, after His indignant visitation of the temple, and the explanatory parable. "Such, after three long suffering years, have I found this incorrigible city, and such is now its reprobate state for ever." Few probably standing there lived to witness the awful catastrophe, but it was, or ought to have had, none the less the value a present fact for them.—ED.

#### NOTE C.

"THE MESSIAH," p. 189.

In the Targum on this famous section (Is. lii. 13. liii.; so it is always read in the synagogue), as we now have it, but which is much twisted according to Abarbanel, "*my servant*," &c. (lii. 13. 16) is applied, as with the Rabbinical school *und voce*, to Messiah; but it is never Messiah Himself who (v. 8) is "*cut off*" or (v. 9) "*put into the grave*," but the "*wicked*" only, or the foes of Israel at that time. For the rest, all the merely calamitous circumstances are confined to Israel, who, after such searching purification for their sins, will enter upon a triumphant consummation under Messiah's glorious dominion.

Abarbanel, however, the greatest expositor of the natural sense, is so sensible that "The true thread or subject of this pericope can be but *one*," that he assigns the *whole* of it to Israel alone; the alternative being one which, of course, no Jew, remaining a Jew, could, without scandal, adopt. An able free-thinker, M. Deutz, himself a Jew, also says that it was the admittedly Messianic meaning of Zech. xi. 10. 12, which had com-



pelled the Rabbins to invent a *secondary* Messiah Ben Joseph (who first occurs, Bab. Gemara, Sukkah, 52 a), to whom the tragical circumstances are applied, while the Targum of Jonathan, allowing that this passage, Isa. lii. liii., applies to Messiah, Ben David, resorts to the most perverse misinterpretations, in order to get rid of its, in such case, inevitable termination upon Jesus of Nazareth. It seems that the only other place in the Talmud where a *suffering* Messiah occurs, is the mythical legend that He was already in the world, and sat as a mendicant at the gates of Rome.

The whole Hebrew tradition on this topic has been supplied by the laborious industry of MM. Neubauer and Driver, Oxford, 1877, who had ransacked libraries of Oxford and the continent for manuscripts during two whole years. Some fifty or sixty authors are quoted at length, down to A.D. 1770. About four-fifths of these confine the words, Isa. lii., *my servant*, to the collective *Israel*; but these ascend no higher than Rashi of the eleventh century, when first the controversy on the passage became flagrant in the West, and it was then impossible for any Jew, remaining such, to refer them to Jesus, so that these comments wear little more than an artificial or adaptitious character, and are often contorted and inconsistent.

But all the first ten citations, beginning with the Targum and the Talmud, and stopping with Rashi, apply "my servant" to an *individual*, which shews that the oral and really intended sense had sunk too deeply by traditional teaching into the minds of the whole Diaspora to be hastily dislodged. Thus from the Zohar alone, eight very significant passages are alleged, all of Messianic application of the chapter, of which I transfer three.

(2) On the words *He carried our sickness*, it is said, "There is in the garden Eden a palace called the palace of the sons of sickness. Into this place, Messiah, on hearing from the souls of the just, the afflictions of Israel below, enters, and there summons every sickness, every pain and chastisement of Israel, and these all come and rest upon him."

(4) On *He was wounded for our transgressions*, we have the doctrine of reversibility. "The children of this world are members one of another. When the Holy One desires to give healing to the world, he *smites one just man* among them, and for his sake heals all the rest."

(5) Again, on the same words, "When the Holy One would atone for the sins of the world, like a physician, to save the other limbs, he bleeds the arm." See also for a paraphrase in same sense as number two, passages from the very authoritative and ancient Breschith Rabba, as quoted in 'Pugio Fidei,' part iii. 637; and indeed, the whole of this part, *De Passione Christi*, is well worth the study.—ED.



## CHAPTER V.

### PROPHECIES NOT UNDERSTOOD BEFORE CHRIST.

Prophecies of which the previous knowledge was kept back—  
Reason of this—Examples of prophecies applied to Christ by  
the Apostles—Miraculous conception of Christ—Resurrection  
of Christ.

No in-  
stance of  
any other  
prophecy  
of fact, ex-  
cluding  
chance or  
reason,  
ever hav-  
ing come  
true in  
the sense  
put upon  
it when  
first de-  
livered.

As every apparent deviation from the ordinary course of nature is not necessarily a miracle, so neither is every prediction to be called a prophecy. Many things may seem in our eyes to be exceptions to the course of nature, which, nevertheless, are in strict accordance with its laws. So likewise many things spoken at random may come true by chance; many things may come true which human foresight was able to divine; and some predictions have a tendency to fulfil themselves. But it may be questioned whether any instance can be adduced in profane history of any prophecy having come true, from which each and all of these suppositions can be plainly excluded. History, indeed, is full of fabulous marvels of all kinds; but if we leave out the Old Testament, it may be doubted whether there be any case, either in ancient or modern times, in which the fulfilment of a prophecy, as just now defined, has been so much as pretended: that is to say, in which an event which no human sagacity could have anticipated, nor any

combination of human means have brought to pass, *came true in accordance with a previous expectation.*

It cannot be too often repeated that it is the previous *expectation*, and that in the case of events quite contingent, as beyond human control, which stops all debate, and constitutes the completeness of a prophecy ; for except the subject of a prophecy be an event placed not only beyond all human calculation, but also beyond all human power and control, the previous expectation might be an occasion of doubt and suspicion, as opening the door to the suggestion of fraud and collusion. There are cases in which a mere previous knowledge of the existence of a prophecy becomes liable to this inconvenience, and would make the proof of a Divine authority next to impossible.

It is the fact of such expectation that settles the question ;

For it was this very alert state in the populace, but on a wrong trace, that made a real difficulty with Jesus Himself in the conduct of His work.

There is, as I have said, a large class of facts which depends upon the voluntary actions of human agents, and which men may possibly agree together to bring about or to hinder. There is another class of facts, the reality of which it may be difficult to prove or disprove, and which therefore, if so disposed, men might simulate, if they did not happen ; or if they did, might deny. In any of these cases the supposition of a previous expectation, instead of assisting us to prove the Divine authority of a prophecy, would only cause its fulfilment to be uncertain. So that if we are examining, not one insulated prediction, but a *scheme* of prophecy, in which, as subordinate to some one great and all-controlling event, certain others had been predicted, some contingent, and others not so, but depending upon known causes, our

for in contingent events, fact of their expectation proves intelligence in the cause.

hypothesis requires that in the *latter* class of events at least there should have been no antecedent expectation. That certain predictions, but forming no proper part of the scheme, had not been understood until after the event, would not impeach the pretensions of the scheme itself to be considered of Divine authority, provided the oversight had occurred only in the instance of such merely circumstantial facts as have been mentioned. If in the case of more serious events, that is to say, of events contingent alone upon the will and power of the Almighty, it should appear that there had always existed, not only an antecedent intimation, but, as regards the general design of God, a full and unequivocal expectation: in this view the absence of any previous thought or special intelligence, far from detracting from the proof of a Divine authority, would confirm it, by excluding any supposition of chance or fatal necessity. Such a fact would indicate the presence of an intelligent *will*. Such a scheme would have all the appearance of having been with God a pre-concerted scheme, as having been planned upon a rule, the apparent exceptions, even, to which could not have been accidental, but plainly indicating intention and forethought.<sup>1</sup>

Certain prophecies, however, not clearly discerned before ;

Bearing these remarks in mind, let us now proceed to examine some prophecies of the Old Testament, confining our intention to those which were referred to Christ by the Apostles. We have seen that, as a general remark, those same prophecies were all so applied by the ancient Jewish Synagogue, but that there are deviations from this rule, some prophecies having been applied to Christ by the Apostles, which had not been so understood before. The question is,

<sup>1</sup> See Paley's "Natural Theology," p. 72.

whether this happened accidentally, or was regulated by the character of the facts, as just now explained ?

In the view which I have been taking of the Evidence for the Gospel, my proper business is not so much to demonstrate *its truth*, as to explain the reasons on which the *belief* of its truth was so rapidly spread. Looking, then, at the belief in the Gospel as an historical *fact*, it will not be doubted that an antecedent expectation of the near approach of a Divine revelation of some sort must greatly have facilitated its reception. It would therefore be perfectly consistent with the belief of its Divine authority, to suppose that prophecies relating to it should have been designedly spread abroad, and have been obscurely understood in some sense not incompatible with its true meaning. This remark will include all predictions of particulars, otherwise indifferent, relating to the nation of the Messiah, to His lineage, His birth-place, the generation in which He was to appear, and so on, for none of these facts were open to fraud or collusion ; and the general object of the prophecies would not have been so effectually promoted by keeping back all knowledge of them, as by its having been long before partially communicated.

But if we examine the history of Jesus, we shall see that there is yet another description of marks and incidents, which, if made the subject of prophecy, were of a far different character, and in which the end proposed would be better answered by previous concealment.

For example : had those prophecies in which the violent death of the Messiah is foreshown, and the exact time when it was to take place, been understood beforehand by the Jews, they would not have

for a mixture of obscurity served the purpose better.

Or even of complete concealment,

as in the case of the death of the Messiah,

put our Lord to death, in disproof of his pretensions, and as a means of undeceiving the people. When pressed by Pilate "to let Jesus go," they "denied the Holy One and the Just," and "desired a murderer to be granted unto them;" but, adds St. Peter, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

and of  
circum-  
stances  
involved  
in it,

The same remark may be applied to passages in any other view quite unintelligible, such as, "they gave me gall and vinegar to drink;" "they parted my garments among them;" "they pierced my hands and my feet." For these were prophecies referring only to the *manner* in which the Messiah was to be put to death. All these passages are applied to Christ by the Apostles, but do not appear to have been so understood in the Targum, nor by the ancient Jewish Church. But this ignorance has all the marks of having been designed, and may be so explained; for it is hardly to be supposed that the Jews would have lent themselves to the fulfilment of these predictions at the moment when they were putting our Lord to death as "a deceiver of the people," had they been aware that these very facts were mentioned in the Psalms, among the notes of the Messiah.

as in  
case of  
Zechariah

The same remark will apply to the thirty pieces of silver which had been given to Judas Iscariot as the price of his treachery, and with which, when it was returned to the rulers of the people, they bought the potter's field. Had that prophecy of Zechariah been known by the Jews to involve also a note of the Messiah, it would have been easy for them, humanly speaking, to have prevented its fulfilment. This is not a merely possible supposition. The prophecy relating to the birth-place of the Messiah



was known to the Jews; accordingly St. Matthew relates that Herod attempted to defeat the prophecy, by the massacre of all the children of two years old and under who were born in Bethlehem, or in the immediate neighbourhood. There are predictions which do not immediately relate to matters of fundamental faith; but there are others of the very first importance which yet come under the same indefinite class. We may mention, as an example, the seventh chapter of Isaiah (ver. 14), in which the miraculous conception of Christ is believed to have been predicted, for in this the existence of a previous expectation would manifestly have destroyed its use.

There is no prophecy of the Old Testament which has attracted more attention from Christians, and been made the subject of more discussion than this.<sup>1</sup> and Isaiah vii., so much impugned, Almost every writer upon this part of the evidences, from Justin Martyr downwards to the present day, has placed it among the foremost proofs of our Lord's Divine character. Schoettgen, who in this is only following a common opinion, considers the evidence of this passage of Isaiah having been a prophecy, and of having received its fulfilment in Christ, to be so plain, that he regards the absence of any notice of it in the Jewish writings to be a proof of the dishonesty of their doctors. "Many things," says Bishop Chandler, "were said in the ancient Targums that do not appear in the present copies. And the same is true of other Jewish books. These writings were entirely in the Jews' own possession a few centuries ago. And as the Jews became acquainted with the state of their controversy with Christians, it was a temptation to expunge such glaring passages as would have given

<sup>1</sup> See Note at end of chapter.—Ed.

advantage to the Christians, and were of no use to themselves, when they were sure not to be found out."

but without  
reason,  
as will be  
shown.

I very much doubt whether there is any legitimate reason for such a sweeping charge. But, as regards this particular prophecy, there is positive proof of its injustice, inasmuch as it is evident from Justin that the Jews in his time explained the prophecy as they now do, not of the Messiah, but of Hezekiah. It is true, nothing can be more tame or less seemingly probable than this Jewish interpretation. Ahaz, we read, was desired to ask a sign of God ; and upon his refusal to do so, the Prophet tells him that the Lord Himself will give him a sign : " Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Now, Hezekiah was never called Immanuel ; and if the sign to be given to Ahaz amounted to nothing more than that a virgin should conceive and bear a son who should be called by that name, the passage, as Justin tells Trypho, would appear to have no intelligible meaning. Nevertheless, it is incontestably certain that no authority has ever been produced from any Jewish writing, either ancient or modern, for the interpretation which was put upon this passage by the Apostles.

In saying this, I would not be understood to mean that there is no really ancient Jewish authority for asserting the miraculous generation of their Messiah ; but only that there is none, as deducible from this particular prophecy. The notion itself which this passage conveys was certainly not new to the Jews ; for it is plain, both from some of their own books, as well as from the Gospels, that the Jews did *not* expect the birth of the Messiah to be in the way of ordinary men.

This was the important question ; it was not “in what wise” the birth of the Messiah might be, but whether it was to be “in the wise” of ordinary men ? So far there is no reason to suppose there was any controversy. “*Who shall declare His generation ?*” said Isaiah ; and accordingly we read in St. John vii., “*Do the rulers know that this is the very Christ ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is.*” Thus we are told by Lightfoot that it is a question often mooted in the Talmud, “whether He was to come from the living or the dead ?” There seems, also, to have been a belief that their Messiah was to be without a father. “*Dixit R. Berechiah quod Deus sanctus, benedictus dicit Israeli, Vos dixistis coram me, Pupilli facti sumus, sine patre.—Redemptor quoque quem ego stare faciam ex vobis, sine patre erit, sicut dictum est, ‘Ecce vir, Germen nomen ejus et de sub se germinabit ;’ et sic dicit Esaias, ‘Et ascendit ut virgultum coram eo.’ Super eo, David quoque dicit, ‘Ex matrice auroræ tibi ros juventutis tuæ.’*” “So far the gloss,” says Raymundus Martini, observing that in these words the deeper Jews referred to the manner of Messiah’s generation.

Now, if the ancient Jewish Church spoke of their Messiah as one who was born “without a father,” and if, that is, they describe His generation under the similitude of a “branch,” or a “root that was to spring of itself out of the ground,” that is to say, which is propagated not from seed, but by a process of its own : in this case, although there may have been no expectation of any such events as are related in Matthew and Luke, yet the minds of men must have been prepared for events which were not in the

ordinary course of nature. And if so, when the Apostles applied the passage of Isaiah now before us to the birth of our Lord, they were not putting any new interpretation upon the received expectation of the Jews, but only striking out a sense from a particular prophecy, a sense which, till then, had not been understood.

But it will be asked, why should the knowledge of this particular prophecy have been kept back?<sup>1</sup> The miraculous birth of Christ was not, it may be said, a fact within the compass of any human agency to control; and therefore this could not have been brought about in consequence of any previous expectation. This is true, but at the same time it was an event which never could have been *proved*, had it even been preceded by a distinct expectation. The absence of such forms now a part of the argument on which the belief of the mystery depends.

For a moment's consideration must show that the reality of such fact rests, and must have rested, on the testimony of Mary alone. The Apostles do not say, nor, if they had, would an adverse party have received their affirmation, that the knowledge of it had been conveyed to their minds by illumination. But even if it had been, it would still be true that the application of the prophecy to the birth of the Messiah was subsequent to His nativity, as also the belief of its miraculousness was anterior to the knowledge of the prophecy. If we read St. Matthew's or St. Luke's account of our Lord's birth, we shall have no difficulty in understanding the origin of this belief. No one who attached credit to the particulars which are there related, would be likely to have questioned the appli-

<sup>1</sup> See Note C.

cation of this prophecy to Jesus ; and no one who did not believe those particulars, could have been called upon to believe the fact, solely on the evidence which the ambiguous or parabolical words of Isaiah furnished. For, as it is well to repeat, the business of prophecy was not to prove the *truth* or reality of facts when they came, but to assist us in explaining their invisible *cause*.

In the present case it cannot be questioned that the event, even if true, was of a kind most difficult to prove, and almost equally difficult of disproof if untrue ; and therefore such as would not on the spot have commanded belief from the dubious simply on the credit of Mary's testimony unsupported by other evidence. This other evidence consisted of the various strange but incidental occurrences related by the Evangelists :—the salutation of the angels ; the manifestation of a meteoric sign in the heavens ; the address of Elizabeth, and all the particulars connected with the birth of John the Baptist. If, indeed, *those* transactions were true, they could not but have been “noised abroad,” and have been heard of, and known to many other persons then alive ; and if false, the refutation of them, therefore, was also easy, inasmuch as at the time of our Saviour's death, or even when St. Matthew's Gospel first appeared, the incidental facts related by the Evangelist might readily have been verified.

And yet it was on these personal but incidental facts that the credibility of Mary's own story must, in the first instance, have mainly depended. The use made of Isaiah's authority by the Apostles, was to identify the child Jesus with *that* child of whom the Scriptures had spoken. And supposing such application of the prophecy never to have been thought of before, but to have been first recognized *after* the



extraordinary facts said to have accompanied the birth of Christ had become known, the testimony of Isaiah becomes then *most* important, as removing from the minds of those who believed those facts to be real all doubt about the true explanation of them. I do not see any other proof of which the nature of the case admitted.

Why, then,  
was know-  
ledge of  
it kept  
back?

It is plain, however, that in this last way of reasoning everything depends on the supposition of all knowledge of this, as a prophecy, having been kept back. If we adopt the contrary view, which in their zeal so many writers have endeavoured to maintain,—that the prophecy had always been understood by the Jews in the sense since put upon it by Christians, contending, as they do, that such miraculous conception of the Messiah had always been a part of the popular expectation,—it is plain that in this case the force of the argument acts in the opposite direction; and a handle might have been given to unbelievers for saying that the whole story was an after-thought, suggested to the Apostles by the well-known belief of the vulgar people in general.

For good  
reasons.

In such circumstances a previous knowledge of the meaning of the prophecy would have caused a difficulty in the way of even proving the fact, and would not have been a confirmation of it. Instead of advancing the Divine purpose, it would have tended to obstruct it; and, reasoning conversely, it follows that the concealment of its meaning from the Jews, who lived before Christ, furnishes no argument against its authority; whereas if we view it, not as by itself apart, but only as *a member of a scheme*, it affords a presumptive proof of the scheme itself having been prepared by Divine wisdom.

So, also,

There is another fact in our Saviour's history, of not

less importance, which does not appear to have ever entered into the contemplation of the Jews; and that is His resurrection. Although it is abundantly clear, from the Targum on Isaiah, that they were fully aware of the predictions in which the sufferings which the Messiah, in some mysterious way, was to undergo are foretold, yet the thought of His being destined to suffer death at their own hands seems never to have presented itself to their imagination. Of course, therefore, those Divine prophecies also which related to the manner of His death, or to any facts—such as was His resurrection—which necessarily presupposed this inconceivable tragedy, could not have been understood by them.<sup>1</sup> Allusion has already been made to some of these prophecies; and it now remains to inquire, whether the same considerations which explain the ignorance of the Jews relating to them, will not also account for the ignorance in which they were kept of His resurrection also.

After that event, the passage of Ps. xvi., “*Thou shalt not leave My soul in hell, nor suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption,*” was applied to this great miracle. The same application was also made of Hos. vi. 2, “*After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.*” St. Paul, it is supposed, refers to this passage in 1 Cor. xv. 4; and it has been so applied by Christian writers. It is clear, however, that the Targumist interpreted the passage as referring to our own resur-

the death  
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event,

<sup>1</sup> An execution, both disgraceful in its nature, and implying, with the Jews, the Divine malediction, on the victim, rather than any acceptance for others. When pressed by Justin, it is admitted by Trypho (the great Rabbi Tarphon, it seems, of Casarea) that had His death been an honourable one, as that of a patriot or a Maccabee, the Christian interpretation might have been tolerated.—Ed.

rection; and I am aware of no passage in the later writings of the Jews from which it can be inferred, by any straining of the words, that they understood either that or any other place of Scripture to intimate the resurrection of the Messiah Himself, though He was expected Himself to raise the faithful departed.

Whether, therefore, we believe this event to have been predicted or not, it seems clear, that the belief of the Apostles was unconnected with any previous expectation of the fact. A rumour had, indeed, transpired, founded upon some dark saying of our Lord. "*The chief priest and Pharisees,*" we are told, "*came together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember this deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure, until after the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead.*" This was the explanation of the fact in the mind of the Jews. But if so, does it not seem evident that in the case of an event so open, *primâ facie*, to such an explanation, any antecedent belief would have seemed not only to justify the suspicion of some collusion on the part of the disciples, but also to account for its success?

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rection  
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If, then, there be any allusions to this event in the Old Testament, they are *ex abundantia*; for the fact, if true, did not stand in need of any extraneous proof. The use of prophecy is not to prove the *reality* of a fact—that must always be assumed—but to demonstrate, as I have before said, by means of a super-human testimony, the agency of a Divine power. But surely those who had seen our Saviour put to death by the hand of the public executioner, and believed that He afterwards rose from the grave, and

remained upon earth forty days, would be able to arrive at this conclusion without the help of prophecy. Pliny the Elder was a believer in the efficacy of natural magic, as distinct from mere fraud, and has a chapter upon the science, as he deemed it to be ; but, if we are willing to accept his opinion as an exponent of the popular belief, to raise a person from the dead was a miracle above the power of the gods to accomplish. "*Ne Deum quidem omnia posse ; namque nec sibi potest consciscere mortem, quod optimum dedit homini in tantis vitæ pænis, nec mortales æternitate donare, nec revocare defunctos.*"<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish Rabbins tell us, *unâ voce*, "that all the Prophets, none excepted, prophesied only of the years of the redemption and the days of the Messiah." — "All from Moses our master," says Maimonides, "to Malachi of blessed memory." — "They all," says Abarbanel, "moved by the Holy Ghost, testify and foretell the coming of the Messiah." It would not, therefore, be any ground of objection to the Apostles in their own day, nor would it necessarily be so in ours, if they had sometimes quoted passages from the Old Testament, and accommodated them to Jesus Christ, although they had not been so quoted and applied before. Nevertheless, except in the cases which we have here been adverting to, of prophecies the true scope of which would seem to have been designedly kept back, I cannot call to mind any prophecy referred to our Lord by the Apostles, which had not been referred to the Messiah by the ancient Synagogue. Nor, except in the instance of events beyond the power of human agency to bring about or to obstruct, do I recollect any more than one personal

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<sup>1</sup> Nat. Hist. ii. 7.

note of the Messiah which had been recognized beforehand by the Jews. This passage is found in Zechariah ix. 9, "*Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*" But this would seem to have been a mark so easily assumed,<sup>1</sup> that it ought not to be numbered among the notes of the Messiah; and can only be adduced as an evidence perhaps to signify his humility. So far its sense was applicable to our Lord in a meaning not, as yet, apprehended by the Jews; but, as a distinguishing prophecy, it can have little weight.

#### NOTE.

"ISAIAH VII. 14."

It does not, indeed, appear, from any extant document of the Synagogue, that this passage counted among those applied as pre-signified notes of the Messiah's temporal advent, and the Rabbis are much perplexed in accounting for the almost insignificant character of the sign. That an *alma*, a young woman, not necessarily, it would seem, an unmarried one, should be in condition to bear a child, would not seem a sufficiently palpable sign of Isaiah's power with God to set the king's apprehension at rest; and, as we are precluded from the resources of scene-painting open to the naturalistic critic, the passage presents some obscurities to the reader, shut up as he is within the four corners of the very succinct narrative. For while, in the Book of Kings, composed a century later, the whole of the reign of Ahaz, including the political crisis, is included in one chapter, this intervention of Isaiah is not so much as mentioned.

However apparently trivial the *sign* or Divine pledge, the juncture itself was a serious one. For the two kings were united not only to invade Judæa, but to depose or extirpate the dynasty of David, and put an intruder, the son of Tabeal, in their place. So we see that the panic had taken not only the worthless Ahaz, but the whole royal family, who have the usual

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<sup>1</sup> Nothing extraordinary in the riding **on** the ass, but the circumstances even here are such; *e.g.* as the manner in which the unseen beast and its owner were indicated, and the easy compliance of the latter with the message.—Ep.



recourse to the oracle, "The prophet that was in those days." Isaiah recalls the Divine promise to David, offering, withal, the assurance of a *sign*; and when this was declined, still insists on, so to speak, forcing the token on Ahaz, "The Lord then shall Himself give you the sign;" and, after the immeasurable terms in which the offer had been couched, concludes by announcing a case which the Rabbis scarcely admit to have been a sign at all, or such, at least, as would add any assurance. Nothing, indeed, can be more grotesque than their devices. But with the bulk of the recent Synagogue, the Emanuel is Hezekiah, and, to those who keep within the limits of history, confining themselves to the passage before them, this might seem the fairest way out. And if we are allowed to suppose—for all is but supposition—that a young consort of Ahaz, who was notoriously barren, should suddenly be declared in the way of providing an heir to the throne of David, such fact might seem a sort of Divine interposition on the one hand, and, at this moment of trepidation for the dynasty, a pledge that rather than the promise to Judah should fail, the Lord would Himself create an heir, plainly, out of the conditions of ordinary nature.

The only apparent alternative, from this point of view, and one harder still for the parties alarmed to verify, is that some *then* designated maiden—notoriously a *virgin*, and continuing such—*virgo prius ac posterius*—should be proved at once to be in the same condition. Though this would have no especial significance for the Davidical dynasty, yet the supernatural hand might seem more palpably present in the *sign*. It is not easily seen, however, how, in the existing human circumstances of suspicion and frailty, such condition could be *verified* in the court of evidence, however really miraculous it might be. As has been said, without supplementing from the pictorial imagination, we are quite in the dark. However, if the house of David, to whom all the circumstances were present and knowable, were themselves tranquillized, they might, perhaps, in either case, look forward with good hope to a day of deliverance, at some point within the seventh year of the child to be born; that being the term current with the Jews for moral responsibility.

Nevertheless, such would seem, left so barely as it is on record, a somewhat singularly selected test, though no other interpretation seems presentable to criticism *ab extra*, which is our province here.

The above, however, being granted as the sense in which the words uttered by the Prophet were then understood, and meant to be understood by the court to whom they were addressed, there might still remain open for the "household of faith" the field of conjecture. For, to Christians at least, the supernatural is the very hypothesis, the *raison d'être* of every narrated transaction, the very reason for narrating the same; while the mere

secular setting—for all things, however Divine, can be executed only in *place* and *time*—is but the secondary vehicle, though a fair subject for interesting illustration. If, then, a *dynastic* theory of the motive of the birth so announced were admissible, it might also favour, not unjustly, the notion so current in Christendom, that a far greater sign of the permanence of the promise with the line of Judah was yet in the Divine contemplation. For there might, on this hypothesis, have been infused into the mind of the evangelical prophet the will to deposit, in his *own* record of a transaction long passed, and nowhere noticed in history, a sort of explanatory prelude, in view of “good things to come;” or to lay some such an *innuendo* in his own somewhat mystical rendering.

Such view would suit, at least, our hypothesis, which is that such narratives, with the whole ancient economy itself, were but subordinate to the supreme end or objective point at which one and all abut—the proper introduction of the “Only Begotten into the world.” With such implication, a sign might have been proposed, in which should be in a manner incorporated a further prediction of a subsequent quite distinct and supernatural fact, which should really prove, for the true Israel, a wonder in the “*depth*”—when the Lord should do a *new thing* on earth, in that a “*woman should compass a male-child*” (Jer. xxxi. 22), whereas the single Adam had given existence only to Eve—and a sign, withal, on the *height* above, a wonder in heaven, when the “*woman, invested with the Sun, should bring forth a male-child*”—the two natures so meeting in remote heir of the now imperilled house of Judah. Matter this, however, for the “household.”

Notwithstanding, however, what learned writers have urged, I agree with our author that, before the opening of the career of Jesus, such construction was not, and, we might venture to think, ought not to have been popularly placed upon the words as one of the argumentative *notes* of Messiah, whatever place it may have had in the contemplation of profounder scrutiny. Indeed, it is difficult to exceed the sublimity of application exhibited in the more ancient Synagogue on this passage, and on chapters ix. and xi.; only it is to be observed that they apply little, if at all, to notes verifiable in the first advent of Jesus, but rather to such a glorified humanity beyond this world, as would be witnessed by St. Paul in his great ecstasies, and declared to the Ephesians and Colossians, or shown to the profound seer of the Apocalypse.

But, as has been said, a view so high does not seem to have entered into the popular expectation, since Jesus seems everywhere acclaimed as the natural heir of David. Moreover, had such been the accredited persuasion, it is difficult to account for the fact that the unmarried life should have lain under a sort of reproach, as seeming to exclude, *ipso facto*, the subject from the

privilege, so coveted, of becoming the mother of the Shiloh. And were it otherwise, there might be conceivably a danger, that at a time when the excitement gave rise to false Messiahs, so these might present themselves—as had even been known in modern times—false mothers of an infant Saviour, and, as such pretension could have obtained among the unmarried alone, in irregular times it might have led to disorder.

Although, however, from the very nature of the case, a conception so transcendent could not well have been verified, even if expected, in the order of *forensic* proof, as was the case with other miracles, such as execution and re-appearance of the Lord; yet it is to be said, that the improbable *fact* of the universal belief itself of mankind in it *after* the occurrence—resting, ultimately, as it did, on the word of the mother—this might possibly, as elsewhere suggested, have been made subject of prophecy; for such would seem the case with the belief in the *Divine* attributes of Christ. That the virginal birth of Jesus was not one of the previous *notes*, is also recognized by a writer in the early part of the second century, the profound Ignatius, who says (Ad Eph. c., xix.) “the virginity of Mary was *hidden* from the Prince of this world, as was also her Child, and, withal the death of the Lord—*τρία μυστήρια τῆς κραυγῆς*—three now clamorous and far-echoing mysteries, which were, however, wrought out in silence by God.” Such language intimates that the premature vulgarization of these secreted truths would rather have given handle to the powers of evil, or to the malice of man under such influence, to defeat and discredit the Divine design.

This does not, however, prevent the possibility that profounder reflection on the part of more contemplative souls, feeling that the language employed so far transcended the requisitions of the temporal event of Is. vii., may have given surmise of a deeper application.—Ed.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Meaning of the Promise of a Messiah explained—External proof of Christ's veracity—*Notes* of the Messiah mostly negative—His death not looked for by the Jews—Supposed disproof of His pretensions—Immediate effects of His death—Argument of the Apostles—Notes of the Messiah made clear by His death—Ignorance of the Jews respecting it.

Influence  
of belief  
of the  
*Promise*  
on all  
Jewish his-  
tory.

WHATEVER opinion men may entertain, on other points respecting that great Promise made by God to Adam and subsequently to Israel, and to which Promise for more than a thousand years, as St. Paul said to Agrippa, "their twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night had hoped to come," there can be no question as to the influence which a belief in it has from the beginning to the present moment always exercised upon the fortunes of their nation; neither can the influence which it continues to exercise upon the condition of a large portion of mankind be made a question. Keeping our eye only upon mere facts which are not disputed, it is certain that mankind at large have at last come to put that construction upon the sense of this and other prophecies of the Old Testament for which the Apostles contended. It is also clear that the Covenant, or Promise, or Good Tidings, or by whatever name we call it, if not fulfilled in Jesus, has not been fulfilled at all.

Leaving the other nations out of the question, and viewing it, for the moment, as a Jewish controversy, it would not seem from what we read in the New Testament that any difference of opinion prevailed at the time when the Gospel first appeared, as to the real existence of the primordial Promise to which the minds of men were then pointed, but only as to the time and place and circumstances of its fulfilment: whether in this or in another life, whether in a literal or in a spiritual, or, as it was then expressed, in an earthly or a heavenly sense. It is plain, moreover, that the definitive settlement of this profound question was not to be obtained beforehand, merely from the bare grammatical meaning of most of the prophecies: it was a matter which was left vague or open in the Jewish Scriptures, and could only be determined by the event.

No dispute at our era as to existence of the Promise, but only as to time *when due*.

But a certain time had been predicted when this uncertainty was to be removed. God was to "send a Messenger of the covenant," who was to be the interpreter of the Promise, and to pronounce the terms on which the benefits of it would be offered to mankind. From His mouth the revelation was to proceed. This narrowed the controversy between the Jews and the Apostles. Was Jesus of Nazareth that Messenger? "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" This was the question on which issue was joined. Was He, or was He not, "that Prophet who should come into the world?"

But a forerunner had been predicted.

Was, then, Jesus this messenger?

With us, in the present day, this question, as has been already said, is easily answered. The time predicted when that Prophet was to come, is now passed. We have lived to see the fulfilment of the Promise which was made to mankind; and the faith of millions

With us, the question has been long answered by the event.



and millions who have lived and died in the belief of its truth, has become an initial point, from which all our reasonings may diverge.

But the  
Apostles  
had to  
bring evi-  
dence from  
prophe-  
cies.

But the Apostles had not, then, this immense fact to stand upon; they were therefore thrown upon the necessity of adducing direct or argumentative evidence. We have seen what was the nature of the authority to which they appealed; it remains for us to examine, in detail, the proofs which they alleged. For the conversion of mankind is not a matter of opinion, but an historical fact; and it is such that it ought to be viewed.

All detail  
confined  
now to  
New Tes-  
tament.

I need hardly observe, that the only *explanation* we now possess of this important fact is contained in the volume of the New Testament. There is no other source to which we can apply for any connected information. On examining this book, then, we find that the whole volume, from the beginning to the end, relates to Jesus Christ:—His birth, His actions, His sayings, His deportment and character, are there portrayed; and from these the writers strenuously and successfully contended, that He was that Divine Messenger so often spoken of in the Old Testament, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. This is the single point which the Apostles laboured to prove. It was not that He was *a* Prophet, but that He was *the* Prophet. It was not that the message which He delivered was *a* Revelation, but that it was *that* Revelation which the whole Jewish nation had been so long expecting; the contents of which had till then been well known to be sealed up, but were thenceforth to be openly declared to all mankind.

What,  
then, were  
the facts

The question, therefore, to be discussed is this: What were those circumstances in the life and actions

and teaching of our Lord, on which so high a claim corresponding ? was founded, and what the reasoning by which the Apostles were able to satisfy so many nations of its truth ? In other words, what were the prophecies fulfilled in His person, by which those who were living when He came into the world, were brought to believe that He was that Messiah whom the Jews expected ?

Putting aside the miracles ascribed to Jesus, and the exalted qualities displayed in all that He did or said, and looking only to the outward circumstances of His appearance,—few things strike the mind more forcibly, when reading the history of His life, than the entire absence of every thing by which His person could have been distinguished from the general mass of human beings. For the person of Jesus, apart from miracles, was not so remarkable.

The great majority of mankind belong to the labouring part of the community ; and in that class our Lord was born and educated ; nor does He seem, even in His ministerial duties, ever to have stepped beyond it. Of His actions or habits as an individual we know absolutely nothing ; no private incident or anecdote of His life has been preserved, even in tradition. Nevertheless, if we compare His history, Born amid labouring classes. brief as it is, with those portions of the prophecies which speak of the future Messiah, we shall see that there is not a note or stipulation in any part of them which was not fulfilled in His history, as it has been related in the New Testament ; nor any circumstance to be pointed out which was adverse to His pretensions, as signified in the Old. And yet so strictly negative were all the other marks on which this proof was to depend, that in looking into the history of Jesus, as it has been narrated by the Evangelists, and comparing it with the prophecies ; or examining the prophecies and

comparing them with the story of His life, it will be difficult to point out any passage of either, by which the identity of Jesus with the future Messiah could have been affirmatively pronounced.

Distin-  
guished  
mainly by  
negative  
marks, so  
as to  
exclude  
false Mes-  
siahs.

There was, indeed, in His whole deportment much to cause admiration and surprise ; and many things in His teaching calculated to arrest and perplex the minds of His hearers, and often to shock their prejudices ; but, if we make the great exception of the miracles which He performed, there is not upon the face of the narrative any one FACT which might not have been predicted of any of His disciples ; not an incident mentioned which could properly have been the subject of an affirmative prophecy ; or if there was, care was taken that no such marks should have been foretold. Precautions had been provided to defend mankind from the danger of believing in false Christs, but nothing more ; all means seemed carefully withheld by which the Jews might know the true one.

Negative  
notes of  
Messiah.

No one not of the seed of Abraham could be the true Messiah ; no one not of the tribe of Judah ; no one not of the lineage of David ; no one not born in Bethlehem ; no one not coming into the world before the destruction of the second Temple ; no one coming into it afterwards. Moreover, a particular catastrophe was foreshown, after which all hope of His appearance was to be for ever at an end. But in the age when the city and Temple were destroyed, though the number of persons might have been few, yet there must, in the nature of things, have been more individuals than one, whom many of these limitations of time and place and lineage, would not have excluded. Every one of these marks, however, was negative only ; no one of them, by itself, was

such as could exclusively apply to but one individual only. Effectual safeguards they might be, and were, under Divine Providence, against the possibility of imposition ; but, taken singly and by themselves, they could be little more. This afford, indeed, no palliation of the crime committed by the Jews in putting Jesus to death ; but it explains their ignorance of His true quality. For if we confine our view to the particular predictions by which their thoughts and expectations were all absorbed, it may be said that His deportment, as well as the account He gave of His views, instead of fulfilling, not only seemed to contradict, but really did contradict every one of the prophecies on which the popular imagination was fixed.

If we examine attentively the narrative of the Evangelists, we shall perceive that the faith, even of our Lord's immediate followers, amounted at this period to little more than a lively opinion, an eager hope in which their hearts and imagination had a much larger share than their knowledge. While their Divine Master was alive, they "had trusted that it should have been He which should have redeemed Israel." But the strength of this persuasion was not proof, in their minds, against the fact of His crucifixion. It would be wasting time to prove this, because no one can have read any one of the Gospels, and have overlooked the many passages in which it is shown. So true is this, that I think we might venture to affirm, without much exaggeration, that at the moment when Jesus "bowed His head and gave up the ghost" there was perhaps not a human being upon earth who knew with full assurance whose spirit it was which had taken its departure. It may be added, that if the story had closed there and then, there would not

Hence  
faith, even,  
of Dis-  
ciples,  
dubious.

be at this present time a Christian in the world.<sup>1</sup> All trace of an event, at which we are told by those who witnessed the scene that “the earth did quake, and the sun was darkened,” would have perished, even from the memory of mankind.

Had all closed with His passion, this would have decided world against Him.

This event, however, was considered at the moment by, at any rate, those who had compassed it, as conclusive of the controversy, so far as regarded the belief that He was or could be the Messiah. “*If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” “*If He be the king of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.*” “*Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself.*” “*He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him, for He said, I am the Son of God.*”—These taunting expressions are noticed by the Evangelists as among the “mockings” to which the Redeemer was exposed;—expressions which I quote, as significant of the reasoning that was in the minds of the spectators.

But God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts. That tragedy which, in the eyes of the Jews, and indeed of all human wisdom and conjecture, must have seemed to disprove the pretensions of Jesus to be the Messiah by an evidence palpable to the senses of mankind, is now become, under the wisdom of God, one of the strongest presumptive proofs of His Divine commission.

For death is no proof of divinity,

In saying this I am not alluding, in this place, to the fact as a fulfilment of prophecy. I am now speak-

<sup>1</sup> Yet it is *here* that the accomplished foreign writer closes, absolutely, the life and career of Jesus, for he ventures to intimate that all that is related of the entombment or of His reappearance, was but a ruse concerted with the complicity of the victim. “*For once Il faiblit,*” are his words.—ED.



ing of the event itself, in its own nature, and what might be its effects. That a religion, the profession of which is co-extensive with civilization,—which the poor as well as the rich, the learned as well as the ignorant, the kings of the earth equally with the least of the people, believe to have had its origin immediately from God,—should have been ostensibly founded by One who was put to death by the public authority, between two thieves, as a blasphemer;—this, surely, would seem to be a fact, as antecedently improbable as any to be found in the annals of mankind.

except, as fulfilment of prophecy, not then known.

And the wonder does not stop here. For why, it may be asked, after His own nation had opprobriously put Him to death as a deceiver of the people, should the rest of mankind, who had never heard His name, have taken up His cause, and have agreed to pay Him Divine honours?

For why should all mankind have taken up such a cause?

Admitting the truth of all that is related by the Evangelists; not denying the wisdom of His teaching, nor the reality of the wonderful actions ascribed to Him; accepting His character as it has been described; even believing Him to have been that Prophet that should come into the world; yet these things, it might and has been said, only prove the fact of a Divine commission; they afford a general foundation of belief, but, taken by themselves, they demonstrate no particular truth, no specific doctrinal truth.

His passion did not, *per se*, involve His divinity;

The death of Jesus upon the cross, for example, does not obviously involve the doctrine of the atonement; and the interval between any fact related of Him by the Evangelists (including even His resurrection) and the belief of His *proper and eternal Divinity* is wider still. Certainly, these were not mere common truths; they are doctrines other than that of our

consequently not the Atonement.

immortality, and, as every one must see, would have required other proof to the minds, otherwise recusant, of Jews or heathens than a reliance upon the belief and sincerity of the Twelve. Even they themselves did not apprehend these truths during the life of our Saviour; or, if they had known of them, they *might* have been mistaken; the thing was just conceivable. It is the *establishment* of Christianity that has since quite changed the ground of argument; but if we place ourselves by imagination in the position of those, to whose minds these and similar vast propositions were for the first time disclosed, we shall have no difficulty in seeing how hard was the task which the Apostles had to accomplish.

And yet the *natural* sense of the Old and the New Testaments presuppose the *death* of the Redeemer.

The language both of the Old and New Testaments plainly presupposes, without any doubt, the *death* of the promised Redeemer. To *die* for the sins of mankind is distinctly enounced in the Evangelical writings as the purpose for which He had come into the world. And yet it is evident, from the history of our Lord, as well as from many particular prophecies, that the instruments of this inconceivable crime were to be the Jews themselves—the very people among whom he was to be born, and with whom the prophecies relating to Him had been deposited, in whom the glorious promise was to be realized.

Two seemingly quite contradictory objects; and how were they ever to be effected? The purpose of all these prophecies was, that the Messiah should be made known to the Jewish people when the time of His appearance should arrive. But if, when He came, the Jews were to be the instruments of His dishonoured death, it was necessary that His quality should be unknown, and the meaning of that part of Scripture

not be understood. For it is hardly to be supposed that they would voluntarily, and with their eyes open, have incurred the guilt of crucifying the Lord's own Messiah. The act presupposes them to have been ignorant of His character. The hypothesis, therefore, on which this part of the Jewish dispensation was founded, would seem to require that the Notes of the Messiah, as they are termed by the Jews, should be of such a kind as not to afford the means of recognizing the person, until after the prophecies relating to His death had been fulfilled; and that this was in effect the case we now know from the New Testament alone. Taking this for our guide, let us examine the means by which the difficulty was overcome.

We have, then, just seen that all the "marks" which the learned Jews have pointed out, by which the person of the Messiah when on earth was to be identified, were but *negative* ones; they would seem, indeed, to have been effectually contrived for excluding "false Christs," but to have afforded in themselves no absolute criteria for discerning the true Messiah when He should appear. With respect to miracles, indeed, it was universally believed that many wonderful, we might perhaps say impossible, signs would be manifested in the days of the Messiah; among the former it was said by Isaiah, that "the blind would receive their sight, and that the lame would walk," as adverted to by Himself in the Synagogue of Nazareth. But I incline to think the Jews considered these to be among the general blessings of the kingdom which would accompany His advent. "In His days, only," says the Prophet. I have not at least seen any authority for believing these gifts to have been reckoned beforehand among the marks by which His *person* would be known.

Nothing in  
Old Testa-  
ment more  
plainly  
predicted.

In the whole volume, however, of the Old Testament there is no single circumstance more distinctly predicted than the fact of His violent death. Moreover, there is not any one prophecy more expressly referred to the Messiah by the ancient paraphrasts, nor more frequently alluded to in other ancient writings of the Jews, than the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. In the Targum of Jonathan there is not one verse in the whole chapter which is not referred to Him by name. In the "*Pugio Fidei*" there are numerous extracts from many later writings, by which it would appear that the more ancient Rabbins had deduced from the same chapter a knowledge of a certain mediatorial or vicarious office; yet it is next to certain that the death of their Messiah, at the hands of His own or of any other people, was never apprehended by them as one of the events by which His kingdom was to be revealed. Though this was foretold as clearly as words can express, not only in the chapter of Isaiah which I have been speaking of, but in the twenty-second Psalm, and in the ninth of Daniel; and though other parts of these chapters are directly referred to Him, yet the possibility of this unimaginable event does not appear ever to have entered into their calculations. It would not be right to say that they had rejected such a supposition, for it had never been surmised.

Know-  
ledge kept  
back for  
Providen-  
tial  
reasons.

The total darkness of the Jewish Church on this point, one so salient, would not be easy to explain by the ordinary rules of probability; but it is evident that except the Jews had been kept in ignorance of it, the great prophecy on which the whole scheme of the Gospel dispensation turns, could not, humanly speaking, have been fulfilled. And, accordingly, if we are

willing to take the Scriptures for our guide, we have not far to seek for a solution of the fact. There are few things more frequently and pointedly spoken of in the Old Testament than the future blindness which was to fall upon the Jews. In the very earliest of all the prophecies relating to the nation, where Moses is speaking of the intolerable miseries they would have to endure in the "last days," it is mentioned among other circumstances, "*that they shall grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness.*" Isaiah, speaking of the same period, tells the Jews, "*the spirit of deep sleep shall be poured upon their understandings.*" They were to "*have eyes and see not; ears were they to have, and hear not;*"—"their hearts were to be made fat and their ears heavy, and their eyes to be shut, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted and healed." It is almost needless to accumulate authorities on this head, for they must be in the memory of every one who is conversant with Scripture. Allusions to it occur in almost every discourse of our Saviour; and the fact is exactly stated by St. Paul, where he tells the Corinthians, speaking of the veil which Moses put over his face,<sup>1</sup> that "*until this day,*" alluding to the Jews, "*remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.*"<sup>2</sup> If, then, we may believe St. Paul, the blindness of the Jews was judicial; but, at all events, he considered it to be the immediate act of God; and the reason would appear easy to be understood if there be any weight in what I have just been saying. For the fulfilment

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxiv.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15. Acts xxviii.



of even other prophecies required that the Messiah, when He came, should be *rejected* of Israel; but as the great end in view was not to mask but to *reveal* to the human race at large, the "Seed" promised to the "Woman," how was this last purpose to be effected, or so much as set on foot, without, at the same time, opening the eyes of the *Jews*, among whom, exclusively, He lived and died? However we may explain the matter, there can be no question as to the fact; but yet, according to the view here taken of the case, this disbelief of the Jews, instead of throwing any doubt upon the truth of the Gospel history, in the mind of a Christian at least, only corroborates the opinion of its origin having been Divine.

Independently, however, of the close connexion between the death of Christ and the doctrines of Christianity, it has a much more important relation to the *evidences* than any particulars which I have now been speaking of.

Voluntary  
death in-  
compatible  
with any  
surmise of  
adulation  
or en-  
thusiasm.

The Jewish authorities, as we know, put our Saviour to death as a "deceiver of the people." But it is plain, from the narrative of the Evangelists, that when they dragged Him before the tribunal of Pilate, there was no evidence to show that they denied or disbelieved the facts related of Him, or that they accused Him of any civil offence; but they asserted that He was attempting to mislead the multitude into a false opinion of His real character. His ostensible claim to miraculous powers is plain from other parts of the narrative; it is also clear that the interpretation which He had Himself put upon the prophecies in those places where the death and sufferings of the future Messiah are spoken of, was the same as that put upon them afterwards by the Apostles.

These facts being premised, it may be shown that they are absolutely irreconcilable with the charge preferred. That very particular proposition which the Jews hoped to establish in putting Jesus to death, was by His death demonstrated to be impossible: the imputation of fraudulent designs was not and *could* not be sustained in connection with his own cool and voluntary self-surrender. For, be the truth as it may, regarding the prophecies of the Old Testament or the miracles of the New, it will still be demonstrably certain that Jesus of Nazareth was not, in any case, a pretender.

It is difficult, indeed, now to understand even the possibility of such an opinion in the mind of any one born and bred a Christian; but Jesus has been spoken of as an enthusiast by not a few, who would have shrunk from applying to Him an opprobrious epithet. I hope to show that the fact of His death, in its attendant circumstances, is equally incompatible with either of these explanations, or with any supposition of His having pretended to be what He was not.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DEATH OF CHRIST (*continued*).

Veracity of Christ proved by His death—He was no enthusiast—  
His death not self-contrived.

Granted  
his Divine  
mission,

LOOKING, then, at the motives for our Faith, without troubling ourselves about metaphysical refinements, but as a practical question, and with reference only to the principles of belief on which mankind at large are accustomed to reason, the argument will be found always to come round to that of the Person of Jesus. Was He, or was He not the *person* that He pretended to be? This was the sole controversy which the Apostles had with the Jews, and it is the same at the present time. If we examine any work upon what are called the Evidences, we shall see that this is always the point finally at issue. After the argument to prove the authenticity of the New Testament has been gone through, the remainder of the reasoning is uniformly employed in proving that the Founder of the Gospel could not have intended to deceive. Such is the real import of most of the disquisitions which we read concerning the sublime morality which Christ taught; the consistency of His doctrines; the wisdom of his sayings; the purity of his life; the oneness and identity of His character; His freedom from all the usual weaknesses and infirmities of our nature:—

all these and such-like arguments reach only to one conclusion. For no one would contend for the eternal Divinity of the Lord because He was meek, and patient, and wise, and free from every stain of sin: the argument is, that no man who can be shown to have possessed all these virtues and qualities, would have said that he had so much even as a simply Divine mission, knowing that it was untrue; nor have pretended to miraculous powers, if he had not really possessed them.

But our Lord assumed much more than this. He did not merely assert a Divine commission. He pretended to a power on earth to forgive sins; He pretended to have been in the world "before Abraham was;" that those who believed in Him should never die; that all power in heaven and earth was committed to Him; making Himself, in short, as the Jews expressed it, "equal with God."

Jesus assumed much more: making Himself "equal with God."

Now, be the apparent virtue and sincerity of any human being what they may, yet to us they can be no more than *apparent*; and if the question be brought to this issue, that we must either conclude these virtues to be assumed, or believe the reality of His title to such sublime pretensions as these words imply—however difficult the alternative may seem, yet would the latter supposition appear to be so beyond measure improbable, that *primâ facie* there would hardly be room for liberty of choice. Putting the case thus nakedly and in the abstract—if the same circumstances were to be acted over again in the world, without prophecies before, without the historical completion after or now, mankind would probably show that either there was fraud in the case, or fanaticism—no mere reasoning would remove this belief; nothing

Such claim only admissible on absolute demonstration,

short of showing, that every explanation of the fact on either hypothesis was *impossible*.

and *this*  
was pro-  
vided  
shortly  
after His  
ascension,  
and then  
generally  
believed.

And yet there can be no doubt that after our Saviour's death these high truths obtained almost immediately a very general belief; but the facts of the case as regards this revulsion in men's minds are not *explained* to us in the Gospels. We there only learn that the Jews had repudiated His pretensions, that His countrymen had slighted the miracles which He had performed, and had dragged Him before the Roman magistrate as a cheat and a deceiver of the people. We also learn, that at this time there was an unfulfilled prophecy among the Jews, not known to the nation at large before the death of Christ, or not understood, which stated that the Messiah, when He came, would suffer death by violence, and by a judicial sentence: He was "*to be taken from prison, and from judgment, and to be cut off from the land of the living.*" Another prophecy, well known and notorious in every Jewish colony, had led them to believe that in the generation in which the Messiah would be revealed was at *that* point of time arrived. These facts belong to history, and are not matters admitting of debate; but beyond this we have no *data* from which to reason. It is, however, plain that soon after our Lord's resurrection, much fresh light respecting His true quality had broken in upon men's minds; this we certainly collect from the narrative itself; but we have no need of evidence for enabling us to say that, at least so far as respects the particular charge of fraudulence on account of which Jesus was unjustly condemned, this could not, from the very nature of things, be true.

Untenable For it was not any matter of fact for which He



stood accused, but for certain *words*, only, which He was charged with having uttered, *knowing them to be untrue*; viz. that He was the Messiah, which, however, was no blasphemy, or even heresy, but, moreover, as He confessed, when challenged, that He was the Son of the true God, which, unless true, was blasphemous. Now, the mere death of Christ was no proof that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah; nor was it a proof that He had really performed the miracles; but it *was* a direct, and, as I hope to show, an *absolute* demonstration of what, so far as we are now concerned, comes to the same point; namely, that when He put forth these claims, He could neither have been acting under a delusion Himself, nor endeavouring to practise any upon others; but that He must have believed what He asserted, and, if so, could not, in this case, have been possibly mistaken in His belief.

For if our Saviour had intended to deceive the Jews into a belief that He was their expected Messiah, for whose coming their whole nation had “been serving God day and night” for so many years, it is morally certain that He would have endeavoured to conform the proof of His pretensions, to the prevalent expectation and belief of the persons upon whom the fraud was to be attempted. Or, if He had ventured upon some original interpretation of the prophecies on which the expectation of mankind was built, the fiction would have been contrived with a view of flattering, and not of shocking their prejudices; of conciliating still farther their support, and not of needlessly exciting opposition.

For example:—knowing that the Jews expected their Messiah to be one of their own nation, no impostor would have gone out of his way to assume

the character of a Greek or Roman. Knowing that they expected Him to be born at Bethlehem, He would not have pretended to be a native of Samaria. Knowing that they expected Him to be of the lineage of David, He would not have given Himself out as one of the posterity of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, "who made Israel to sin." By parity of reasoning, knowing that the Jews expected Him to come surrounded with regal state, and to assume the throne of Israel—comporting Himself somewhat after the manner of Messiah—it is still more certain that no man, who was an impostor, would have rejected the seduction of such an interpretation of their ancient oracles,—one offering so many temptations to an ambitious or designing man,—for the mere vanity of being the author of a new interpretation, importing that the future Messiah, instead of being a mighty potentate, was to present Himself in a character apparently more near akin to that of an outcast, than a king or conqueror, an object of derision and dislike.

I have here put the case as strongly as the argument would seem to require ; but not so strongly as the fact. In the instance actually before us, if we were to suppose the Jews to have been right in their accusation of our Lord, not only must we believe that He was uselessly fixing upon the prophecies relating to the Messiah a private sense, in opposition to the universal persuasion of those whom He was hoping to deceive ; a sense which involved of necessity the renunciation of every object which we could imagine, to stimulate the ambition of one whom we are supposing to be an impostor ; a sense, moreover, which must, by the very fact, have prevented the success of His design, whatever it may have been ;—but it was, we

may add, a sense which presupposed a hope of His being put to a shameful, discrediting, and ignominious death ; and this not as a possible consequence, to be risked, but as the very postulate on which the success of the fraud depended. Do the annals of mankind supply, or has any one in his own experience heard, of such an attempt as this to deceive mankind, having yet been ever practised ? Certainly no miracle could be more contrary to the course of nature, than such a supposition as has here been made would be to the first principles of the human mind.

In the preceding remarks we have seen that the supposition on which the charge of the Jews was founded could not be true ; and any other would seem to be still less possible. If, then, from the very nature of the human mind, it be certain that our Lord was not attempting to practise deception upon others, in that case He must be supposed to have been misled, either by Himself or others. Unless we believe Him to have been a dupe, He must have been either a fanatic, or a lunatic, or a somewhat compound of them. As no difficulty can apparently be greater than the belief of His having really been what mankind are here taken to have supposed, provided we can disprove this, it will not matter, it may be thought, by what other principle we account for His motives.

But mankind do not appear, in fact, to have reasoned in this preposterous way ; and surely, when we read the history of Jesus Christ, we cannot be surprised that they did not. In truth, the religion of which He was the unquestionable founder, furnishes a sufficient answer to all vague conjectures of this sort, if we are to suppose them to be gravely put

forth. Though the wisdom of our Lord's instructions and sayings, the purity of His life, the calmness and majestic simplicity of His deportment, in every circumstance, however trying and affecting, may not warrant us in affirming that He could not have been a mere man, yet are they most assuredly sufficient to warrant us in saying that He was not a madman, or a fanatic, or a mere ignorant tool in the hands of such men. We come now, however, to deal with a circumstance belonging to the death of Christ, which at once removes His case out of the reach of every such explanation; a circumstance which makes the supposition of fraud or delusion to be alike inconceivable; and that is, that His death was in fulfilment of a prophecy latent at that moment and misunderstood, but which immediately after, and not before, was set free from its obscurity.

His sacrifice quite other than suicide of Peregrinus.

The sacrifice of Christ was not self-inflicted, like the death of Peregrinus, the crazy sophist, of whose self-martyrdom at the Olympic games, in emulation of our Saviour, Lucian has written or invented an account. Our Lord did not, like him, raise a funeral pile with His own hands, leap into the flames, and invite all Jerusalem to witness the fulfilment of a promise to rise again to life. The death of Jesus was in pursuance of a judicial sentence, passed by the judge himself, with hesitation, inflicted, not by his own hand, but by the hand of the public executioner, and that on the imperious solicitation of His enemies. And yet in no other way, that we can see, would the prophecies have all been fulfilled; for, according to these, the Messiah was not to die a natural death, nor by His own act, nor in expiation of any criminal action: all these points were expressly stipulated. Put the

case, therefore, as we please—whatever hypothesis we adopt—we must assume His death to have been preconcerted by Himself, if we believe it to have been connected in His own mind with no other motive than the mere ambitious fulfilment of a prophecy. One feels unwilling to be obliged to entertain so unlikely an explanation ; but let us, for the mere sake of argument, suppose it possible ; yet, if this way to posthumous renown was in the view of Jesus, in what way was such a purpose to be accomplished ? The design, it may be admitted, might have entered, as we have said, into the mind of a madman (though only of a madman) ; but by what artifice, or under what conceivable pretence, was a would-be Prophet, without committing any act so criminal as would at once refute all pretensions to holiness, to engage not only His enemies, the Jewish rulers, but the reluctant Roman governor, and the whole body of the people, to have been confederate with Him in such an incomprehensible conspiracy ?

Combining, then, the history of our Saviour's *death*, as related by the Evangelists, with the *prophecies* of the Old Testament, we are, I think, justified in saying that the charge of turbulent fraud, for which He suffered, could not be true. Any fraud could not have been on His part. The prediction of Isaiah may, or may not, have pre-signified the passion of the Messiah ; but if this was the interpretation put upon it by Jesus, and that in opposition to the belief of the whole body of His countrymen, be He what He may, it is impossible that He should have been an impostor. It would less shock <sup>1</sup> our reason and common sense to believe, that the whole narrative was nothing more than a fable, invented afterwards, on purpose to

So that all thought of imposture is excluded.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Note.



exclude that particular opinion. Such an hypothesis is not likely to have many supporters; but it may not perhaps involve what might be called moral absurdity: it is simply incompatible with the evidence of history; for we know, with absolute certainty, and that on evidence quite independent of the testimony which is furnished by the Evangelists, that the crucifixion of Jesus, under Pontius Pilate, was a real *bonâ fide* transaction, reported to head-quarters.

NOTE, p. 241.

LEGEND—MYTH.

However *shocking* to good sense, the thesis anticipated (1840) has been sustained and welcomed with no small acclaim in a certain world of cultured outsiders not a little bewitched by the consummate workmanship and sly address of its originator. It has even obtained a place in serious discussion, though its votaries seldom deign to discuss, as the *Legendary* theory.

It amounts to as much as this. So late as the interval between A.D. 75 and A.D. 95, the Jesus known to ourselves lived only in the medium of popular, unguarded or 'naive' tradition. But now, from among the multitude of adherents, persuaded all of Messianic pretensions (never thought of by Himself), infatuated withal in many cases with the impression of a diviner character, a demand arose, before the generation had utterly died out, for the consolidation of the floating material in conformity with popular requirements. The want was met by three individuals; by two at Rome—we will call them Mark, and Luke (who subsequently embroidered the drier detail of Mark, that is, the original)—and by one Matthew, in remoter Galilee, whither Mark's work had also found its way; Mark's account, however precarious, Matthew again overworked, as too matter-of-fact for the taste of the time. These even went so far as to invent, or to adapt upon calculation, each floating trait to the language of the ancient prophets.

It is unnecessary to say that there exists no morsel of *proof* for what is so singularly asserted, as it is also contrary to intrinsic evidence and to tradition; for, as the Dean observes, in their identical portrait the synoptic three run as directly athwart, or counter to what *was*, we know from Josephus, the only authority, the *popular* conception, as if this had been outraged upon calculation. So the gospel, with sundry cultivated but yet half-educated persons who have not seen the need of

informing themselves, passes for Legend;<sup>1</sup> a convenient and portable piece of information which they owe to the brain of the able and astute French academician.

The word itself derives, as is known, from the *legenda*, or short piece to be "read" in the course of the Latin office of the saint of the day. This commemorated, usually, some thought or memorable incident attributed to a life notoriously above the ordinary measure of natural or even Christian conduct, and perpetuated in the grateful memory of simple souls in the city or province which had been the scene of it. And thus, in a circle of pious and persons non-reading (and not the *poor* alone were then unlettered), but deeply touched in affection and imagination, certain particulars, strange, and foreign possibly to the fact, might accumulate, no one knows how, at times around the oral transmission of a career more truly edifying in its difficult virtues than even in exterior splendour. Hence the secularization of this word for an untrustworthy tale in general.

For the rest, the notion of *Legend* differs from that of *Myth* which made the fortune of young and inventive professors at Tübingen, in that a Legend must have some notorious fact or person for at least its nucleus; whereas a mythus, or "philosophic" *fable*, is, as such, incompatible with any *history* at all. Thus, no *individual* possessing even the amount of reality needed for Renan's Jesus, ever was. The life was never more than a parable mistaken by the many for fact. This was the bold position of Strauss. Out of this fable arose Christendom.

The only instance known to myself of a mythic *idea* which had been actually translated by popular devotion into fact, is the profound and characteristically Christian fable of St. Christopher, which so captivated the simple but poetic mediæval mind. Needless to add that this, though taken as history by the simple, does not *pretend* to stand upon an inch of overt fact, any more than do the fables with *moral* known to our childhood. The import of history, ancient and mediæval, more intelligently because more largely appreciated and reviewed in the light of the great lessons with which the last century of the era closed, has shown to writers dominated with the implacable instinct, that the untoward and importunate portent has to be slain, if *ever*, in the cradle, or in the *twilight* between A.D. 75 and A.D. 110, when we meet Pliny's letter, the first notice from the outer world; and so, as there is extant no other account whatever to upset or control the accepted narrative, professors have run up this theory of myth or legend:—

"All wrought out of the carver's brain."

—Ed.

<sup>1</sup> In one case, however, M. Renan derogates from his hypothesis, where, in the impossibility of reducing the death and resurrection to mere legend, it is intimated that the death (but *not* the crucifixion) was a ruse concerted between the Master and His *excitable* followers.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PROOF OF CHRIST'S SUPER-EXALTATION.

Christ's resurrection—His spiritual kingdom—Difficulty of proof—His ascension—On what grounds His spiritual authority believed—Miraculous powers of His disciples directly communicated by Christ—This proved by the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.

Death of Jesus, whatever its since seen *doctrinal* importance, was, as *evidence*, little more than negative.

I HAD occasion to remark that those particular predictions of the Old Testament, which were understood by the Jews as the personal notes or marks of the Messiah, would appear to have been designed for the purpose of preventing deception or mistake on their part, rather than of leading their minds to any positive knowledge. Of this kind may be reckoned the prophecies signifying no more than the nation, and tribe, and lineage, and birth-place of the Redeemer, and some others. If I did not rank that important one of the death of Christ among them, it was because this was not so spoken of by the Jews who lived before Christ, although really foreshown in terms beyond all comparison more clear and unambiguous than any recognized prediction; and was, in its own nature, by far the most important.

Its miraculous character shown only by the Resurrection.

This last mark, however, of death—for death is the common lot—like every one of the personal notes, was as such a simply negative one. Except in the circumstantial particulars, there was nothing in the

fact itself by which it was to be distinguished from the death of Socrates, or of many other wise and good men, who have fallen victims to the prejudices and passions of a misguided multitude. It does not appear from the narrative that it happened in any respect contrary to the usual course of nature. That which invested the fact at once with its *miraculous* and preternatural character, was our Lord's almost immediate resurrection. It was this which stamped the whole event with a Divine character, and furnished a key to those obscurer passages in which the Messiah's death and sufferings were foretold.

From this epoch the same remark will apply to many other incidents related by the Evangelists. Thus the manner of His death, by piercing His hands and feet; the gall and vinegar which were given Him to drink; the division of His garments among the soldiers; the purchase of the potter's field with the price of His blood;—though all of them within the ordinary course of things,—must nevertheless, in the minds of those who believed them to have been divinely foretold, have passed for miraculous, in the sense I have attached to that term.

And so with the accessory circumstances.

It is always in place to remember that the great and dominant subject of the evangelical prophecies is not so much the *person* of the Messiah, as the character, polity, regimen, of that future *kingdom* from heaven above, which He was to establish in the world, and which was the end assigned for His advent. Now the authority of a prophecy, as *inspired*, admits of one only proof—and that is, its fulfilment. We may be confident, in the interim, of the Divine inspiration of a prediction as yet unfulfilled on the evidence of other events which, having been foretold, have come

to pass : and this *was*, no doubt, the ground on which the Jewish expectation of their promised Messiah was mainly built ; nevertheless, we could not know as a *fact* that it had been communicated from Above until after the event.

Yet, even then, He did not at once seem to Jews to fulfil, but rather abrogate, the Law.

Accordingly, had our Saviour, when He re-appeared upon earth after His resurrection, shown Himself to the Jews surrounded with the accessories of temporal dominion ; had He, that is to say, agreeably to their not unnatural but mistaken expectations, literally ascended the throne of His father David, and began to reduce all the neighbouring nations to subjection ; —in that case, not even the Jewish priests and rulers by whom He had just been condemned to death, would have questioned the identity of *His* person and kingdom with that person and that kingdom which were spoken of in the Scriptures. By the same rule, we need be at no loss to understand their backwardness to admit the truth either of the facts related by our Lord's followers, or of the interpretation put upon these facts by the Apostles, for, in the view taken of their Scriptures by this nation, the facts related of our Lord's life and preaching by His disciples were certainly not so much the fulfilling as the abrogation of their Law.

But the reasons why the Jews, as a nation, or polity, though not as a very numerous "remnant" rejected the new Institution when it was first announced to them, are foreign to my immediate subject ; my only aim is to explain the arguments or motives by which so many thousand minds of all nations and languages were persuaded to *embrace* it. For it is *here* that the burden of proof lay, for the moment, with the Apostles, and the closer the view which we take of the subject,



the greater and more complex will appear to have been the difficulties which they had to surmount.

The controversy, however, between Judaism and Christianity, as I shall have occasion to show at length hereafter, did not so much regard the prophecies themselves, as the principle by which they were to be interpreted, whether in a literal or, relatively, a spiritual, or, as a Jew would have expressed it, in an earthly or a heavenly sense. The Apostles contended for the latter. They spoke of a spiritual kingdom—a city of souls; of a supernatural throne erected in the heavens; of a power and dominion whose effectual insignia were out of sight. But the Jew would naturally ask—How was the reality of this vision to be demonstrated? By what *tests* could the fulfilment of such a prophecy be ascertained? Admitting, even, the fact that all authority in heaven and earth *had* been committed to Jesus Christ, yet by what evidence could the Apostles know this to be true? In Limborch's account of his controversy with Orobio, the Jew urges this very difficulty: "Since the things of heaven are not cognizable by our senses, the Apostles," he says, "could not prove their truth, except from the clear and manifest fulfilment of the prophecies; and as this evidence was not vouchsafed, whatever other things are asserted in this advent, become open to suspicion."—"Cum cœlestia sensibilia non sunt, non aliunde suam certitudinem probare poterant quam ex promissorum clarâ et apertâ adimptione: quæ cum non fuerit, cœtera quæ referuntur suspecta fuerunt." Scrip. Tert. p. 147.

For their question with Christians was not the prophecies, but their interpretation;

It was a difficulty not at that conjuncture to be dissembled. The Jews might have said, "Supposing the sense put upon the meaning of God in this part of the

and this was an obvious difficulty till after Pentecost.

prophecies by Christ's disciples, and not that put upon it by ourselves, to have been the true sense; or supposing the prophecies themselves to be as clear and as free from ambiguity as any propositions can be which are expressed in words; yet the exaltation of Christ in the heavenly places, admitting it even to be true, is not a fact falling under the notice of our senses, or certified to us by conscious experience,—how, then, can the fulfilment of any prediction relating to it be known as a prophecy in fact, or be anything more than a matter of suspended belief, to be classed with thousands of other truths hereafter only to be revealed?"

But this has since been settled for us by the fact of the Church, and our belief in His Deity.

Well, this enormous fact, and that in the sense of Scripture, has now been put beyond question in the wonderful triumph of Christ's Church upon earth; but the case was very different in the days of the Apostles, for they had to reason with persons born and bred in very adverse ways of thinking. Pure and beneficent as is the portraiture of Jesus Christ, as delineated in the New Testament; and wonderful as are the actions by which His Divine authority was attested; yet there is nothing in His life, or in the manner of His death, which at the time and by themselves would have necessitated a belief in His proper Deity. So long as the question related only to the credibility of His testimony respecting the commands or the promises of God, He was within the limits laid down for a prophet in Deuteronomy, and ample foundation was laid for the faith of His followers. And so they appear to have judged. But we read that when He began to change the ground, and to hint more directly at the great truth of His Divinity, some of His hearers took up stones to stone Him; and even His disciples

deemed it a hard saying, and many of them, as the Evangelist tells us on a similar occasion, thenceforth turned aside from following Him.

And yet we know that within a very short period from this time the belief of His followers, and not of His followers only, was on this point entirely changed. Whence did these proceed? What was the evidence, it naturally occurs to ask, on which such a rapid change of opinion was founded? The answer is not so immediately obvious as might seem. We have seen that during the lifetime of Christ the minds of His disciples were not enlightened as to His true character. And during the few days which intervened between His death and resurrection, even the very qualified opinion which they had formed of His being their future King would seem to have vanished from their thoughts. It is not less certain that no knowledge of this profound truth had penetrated their minds during the interval between His resurrection and final disappearance from among mankind. Even when He had explained to the disciples at Emmaus, and afterwards to others of them, "all things which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Him," still their imaginations would seem to have been unable to grasp so extraordinary a fact; their understandings still remained covered with a veil. For the last words, St. Luke tells us, which they addressed to Christ, the very instant before His ascension, showed that their minds were still in darkness. "*Lord,*" said they, "*wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" Implying that, even then they looked upon our Saviour as one who was to be, though in some transcendent sense, a temporal prince in Israel.

For this belief obtained soon after ascension, but why not before?

and for  
intelligible  
reason.

If we reflect for a moment, we shall, I think, see that all this was in strict accordance with every opinion we can form of the human mind. So long as Jesus continued to mix with His disciples in a human form, no impression upon their understanding was, or could have been, of power to countervail the prejudice of their *senses*. I am persuaded that, in any parallel circumstances, a supposition of the Deity of Christ would have been beyond the compass of human belief: it was, we might almost call it, for them, an impossible conception. His ascension into heaven, and His being received out of the sight of His disciples, almost while the words I have adverted to were yet on their lips, may be thought to have put a final stop to all hopes of a temporal kind; but between the renouncement of all expectations of *that* nature, and the belief that He was seated at the right hand of God, and that thenceforth "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth:*" the distance, even between these two propositions is scarcely to be measured.

What,  
then,  
the new  
motives  
for so great  
change?

The inference from the facts here stated involves another of equal or greater importance. Since the belief of the Apostles, and of the other disciples, in the doctrine of our Lord's *Divine* attributes had no firm seat in their minds until all direct intercourse between them and Christ had been, to every outward appearance, cut off, it would seem to follow that the reasoning on which this subsequent belief was grounded, must necessarily have been drawn from some proof which was independent of previous views, and which must have come to their knowledge at an after-stage of the evidence.

I am not going, in this place, to enter upon the general question of our Lord's Divinity, as it respects the proofs on which that great doctrine is commonly made to rest in the present day ; but only to point out the *facts* or data from which the wide belief of it would appear to have taken its *rise*, for it was these that furnished the *key* by which the Apostles were enabled to explain to their cotemporaries the language of the *Old Testament*.

It would, of course, be impossible to show, one by one, of all the miracles ascribed to Christ, that each of them was separately believed by every Christian from the beginning. But a belief at least of these more patent facts of His resurrection, of His ascension, of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and of the miraculous powers attributed to the Apostles, and partially to others of the early Christians, was certainly universal. Assuming the *belief* of these several facts, on the part, at least, of the whole of His adherents, what I *now* wish to do is clearly to point out the intrinsic connection between *this* belief of theirs, and the belief or settled conviction of that supreme *dominion* which, from the days of the Apostles to the present time, Christ has always been taken to exercise over the interests of His visible kingdom, and the actual *assumption* of which has been explained to be the fulfilment of that long train of prophecies in which the future kingdom of the Messiah was fore-shown.

It is plain, both from the Acts and the Epistles, that not only the Apostles themselves, but likewise many of the other disciples, were endued consciously, or believed themselves to be endued, and were also credited by others, with a variety of miraculous gifts.

These were the generally notorious facts of His resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost, with effusion of miraculous powers even on His *ministers*,

as plain from Acts and Epistles,



These gifts, I may add, are never by them spoken of as the result of any virtue or power inherent in themselves, but are uniformly attributed to the authority of the now invisible Jesus.

and the  
miracle of  
St. Peter.

Thus, when St. Peter cures the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, he says, "*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I unto thee: in the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk.*" And afterwards, when the fame of the miracle had attracted the attention of the chief priests and rulers, he addressed them, saying, "*Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand before you whole.*" In another place the same declaration is made, but in terms still more distinct. For when the Apostle cures Æneas of the palsy, we are told that "*Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise and take up thy bed: and he arose immediately.*" In these, and in all the other cases where similar powers were exercised by the Apostles, they were always referred by them to the same cause: namely, to gifts imparted to them they knew not how, but by a hand which they could neither see nor feel, but which they considered to be Christ's. Admitting, then, the miracles related in the Acts to have been really wrought, and supposing the Apostles to have had reasons for saying that the power of operating them proceeded directly from the invisible agency of Jesus in heaven, it will be plain that a sufficient ground was laid for associating these great facts with that part of the evangelical prophecies in which the Messiah's kingdom or *regal* institution is foreshown.

What might be the extent or nature of the authority delegated to Christ in heaven would not be so easy to define ; but that He was still *alive*, that He was invested with Divine powers of some sort, that His influence over His followers had not been withdrawn, must have seemed to be a *fact*, the belief of which was not to be resisted. If, after He had ceased to be numbered among the inhabitants of this world, an unseen intercourse between Him and those who believed in His name continued to be kept up ; and the same power to control the laws of nature which He had exercised upon earth still remained in His hands, and was even made more manifest in the transcendent powers communicated by Him to those with whom the duty of founding the knowledge of the kingdom was left in charge—such a conviction, on the part of the Apostles, will abundantly account for their own belief respecting the reality and nature of the continued presence and authority of their unseen Master in the Church below.

For it may be observed that it was not a case of agency no more than *spiritual*. Whatever the faculties of superior *spirits* be supposed to be, if it be once admitted that they are allowed to interfere with the laws of God's material world, it becomes difficult to say that any particular miracle is beyond the compass of their power to bring about. In the case before us, however, it is not a question of mere miraculous power. Whatever faculties any created spirits may be deemed to possess, these must have been bestowed upon them by God ; they are but the gifts of Him who made them, and not the effect of their own skill and knowledge, any more than the instincts of the feeblest insect are the result of its own handiwork. Allowing, therefore,

All which show Jesus to be now omnipotent in heaven and on earth,

for no created spirit can bestow miraculous powers on others.

the natural powers of other orders of beings to be ever so different from ours, or ever so superior, yet no one, I think, will suppose that, as creatures, they are able to impart them to other finite beings : for this would be the act not so much of a merely spiritual as of a *creative* agency.

So that  
Jesus must  
now have  
been *felt*  
to exist,  
and that  
in a nature  
*Divine*.

If we follow out this reflection, we shall see that, supposing the miraculous gifts exercised by the Apostles to have been communicated to them by Christ, He must ever have appeared to them, at least, to exist, when He left this world, not so much in His human capacity, nor in the quality even of an angel or created spirit, but in a nature which, if not Divine, we are unable to define in any other terms.

But  
whence  
did *Apos-*  
*tles* draw  
the proof?

But, to return, whence was it, it is obvious to ask, that the Apostles and first preachers of Christianity drew their main reasons for saying that the unseen author of the miraculous gifts exhibited by them was *Jesus Christ*? Or supposing them to possess, from their personal consciousness, such evidence as satisfied their *own* minds as to the true cause, yet how were they able to satisfy the minds, as it would seem they did, not only of the bystanders, but of reasonable men in general? It might have been surmised, or *said*, at least, by the absent, to have been the effect of some illicit secret, or of fraud and collusion, or, again, of the immediate operation of the eternal Father Himself; then in the face of these and other conceivable solutions, *whence* was the proper evidence obtained from which the miracles in question, and all those gifts of the Spirit of which such frequent mention is made both in the Acts and Epistles, were *believed* to have had the departed *Jesus* for their author? It can hardly be thought that the Apostles had no other proof to adduce, except their

personal affirmation. They must have had, in the twilight of those days, some evidence besides this, or the success of their operations would probably have been limited to a much smaller number of persons.

If we turn to the history of the Apostles, this evidence seems to be clearly enough stated. The reason why the phenomena were believed to be attributable to the personal agency of Christ was founded upon premises commensurate both with the strength and universality of the persuasion itself, and also with the importance of the conclusion which was built upon it; and built, let me add, upon premises which involved no controversy at all, but only the reality of a fact which was then easily to be verified, and certainly was not of a kind likely to be taken for granted on mere vague report.

It is now time to say that the fact to which I am alluding is that great and, as it were, obtrusive miracle of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the festival of Pentecost, the account of which is given in the second chapter of the Acts. This season, as we know, was one of the great festivals of the Jews, when large numbers, from every part of the world, were used to assemble together at Jerusalem. On that occasion the disciples are described as being assembled together in the same place, when suddenly it was filled with a loud noise, resembling that of some high wind; and the appearance of a flame descended upon them, and sat upon each, in the shape as of "cloven tongues." Immediately after, as the history tells us, "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance;*" and this being noised abroad, a promiscuous multitude, coming from different parts of the world, and using

From the  
great  
events of  
Pentecost,

different languages, were brought together; and to their astonishment, as well as to that of the disciples themselves, were heard by the latter, every one in his "own tongue wherein he was born."

when  
Peter  
openly  
proclaimed  
it as fact.

St. Luke proceeds to describe the effect of the amazement which seized upon all who were present; subjoining a circumstance which, in the case of facts claiming to be miraculous, is of importance to the evidence; viz. the accompaniment of such a result as might have been expected to follow, supposing the history to be real, and to have been generally *believed*. After St. Peter had addressed the numbers who had assembled, as soon as what had happened became known, St. Luke tells us that besides other marks of the impression made upon the minds of the persons present, there was added that same occasion to the number of the disciples "three thousand souls," and that from thenceforth the number of believers increased daily.

Truth of  
the facts  
related is  
demon-  
strable as in  
"Hœra  
Paulinæ."

Let me here observe that, always excepting the extraordinary, and what in any profane history might be called the almost incredible character of the event itself here described, there is no note of truth which can be required in a narrative of facts that is not to be found in the above account. It is preserved in a writing respecting whose authenticity it is hardly possible to doubt. Over and above every external mark which can attach to a document of antiquity, and the entire absence of any counter-evidence, the numerous undesigned coincidences which Paley, in his "*Hœra Paulinæ*," has pointed out between the narrative of St. Luke and the Epistles of St. Paul, are such as may be said literally to *demonstrate* that St. Luke was himself cotemporary with all the facts which he has related, and an ocular witness of many



of them. With respect to the particular miracle immediately before us, it was eminently public ; transacted in the open day, before numerous spectators, and at a time when Jerusalem was filled with thousands and ten thousands of strangers, collected from every quarter of the world.

But it is not necessary here to discuss the evidence of the fact farther than to show that it was a fact that was believed by those who, if it had not really happened, could not, under the circumstances given, have been deceived. We know how emphatic a stress was laid upon this eventful manifestation by the Apostles and early converts, and how important a place it occupied in their belief. A miracle seemingly more unambiguous in all its circumstances, or more incontrovertibly stamped with the marks of a Divine authority, could not have been exhibited before the eyes and understanding of mankind. And, therefore, when the historian goes on to tell us that "*from that day many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles ;*" and we find St. Peter addressing the assembled multitude, and saying, "*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses ; therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear :*"—we can no longer be at a loss to understand the reason why the Apostles and others, who had been unaware of our Lord's true character while He was on earth, should have regarded Him after His death as an object of worship and adoration. The data on which they reasoned is, I think, sufficiently intelligible ; the only thing that requires explanation is the logical link or medium of proof by which the Apostles were enabled to conclude that the

The miracle was believed by those who could not have been deceived.

miraculous gifts with which they were endued were the effect of Christ's personal agency, instead of ascribing them, as might at first sight have seemed more natural, to the direct interposition of God.

Foretold  
only by  
Joel, and  
in general  
terms.

I am not aware of any passage of the Old Testament in which this same miracle of the descent of the Holy Ghost is properly foreshown, but only a general promise, as in Joel,<sup>1</sup> of an effusion of the Spirit in the last days. No specific knowledge or expectation could have been drawn from these prophecies; least of all such a knowledge as the present case would require. Neither, if we examine the miracle itself, can any particular mark be pointed out, by which the hand of Christ could be directly recognized. Joining all the circumstances together, there was enough to create a general presumption in favour of such a belief; but they were not such proofs as the Apostles could have urged in an argument with the Jews, nor as the analogy of God's dealings, or the importance of the doctrine at issue, would seemingly have demanded. There are many doctrinal truths which are now supposed to require no other evidence than the written words of the Apostles, which wanted a corroborative evidence in their day; and among these the doctrine before us must certainly be considered as one.

There are, no doubt, several points of present belief which would seem to rest altogether upon their authority, and most of these, so far as they are doctrine, do rest, more or less, upon our persuasion of the veracity of the Apostles; but beyond the allowed veracity of their testimony, nothing is usually taken for granted in the establishment of any fundamental doctrine; since it is assumed that we, who now reason about

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Note.

those doctrines, are ourselves in possession of all the proofs that were vouchsafed to Christ's immediate followers.

If we may believe the Apostles, our Lord had told His disciples before His ascension that "all power or omnipotence had been committed to Him both in heaven and in earth." Before that time He had often consoled them, under their sorrow at the declaration of His being about to go away, by promising to send them in His stead, "*another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth Himself, who should teach them all things, and bring all things to remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them.*" He told them that one purpose of His departure from among them was in order to fulfil this promise, inasmuch "*as if He went not away, the Comforter, whom He would send unto them from the Father, would not come unto them; but if He departed, He would send Him unto them;*" assuring them at the same time that He would not leave them without help, but "*that He would be with them always, to the end of the world.*"

The Holy Ghost was foretold to Apostles before ascension as His own gift.

This, according to St. John, was not the topic of one or two discourses of our Lord, but was, in one form or another, the prevailing subject of almost all His closing communications; in which He repeatedly told the Apostles that the reason of His impressing this promise so often upon their memory was, that when the things which He was speaking of should come to pass, they might recall His words to mind: saying, "*And now I have told you before, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*"

So that it was obvious to them to connect

When we connect these and other discourses firmly deposited with them by Jesus to the same effect, with

His  
coming  
with  
invisible  
power of  
Christ  
on high.

the great facts afterwards narrated in the Acts, it is not difficult to account for the belief of the Apostles in the existence of our Lord's invisible power and authority over His Church. Combining the fulfilment of the promises made to themselves with His resurrection from the grave and subsequent ascension into heaven in the open day, and before the eyes, not of the Apostles only, but of many witnesses, a sufficient basis of *fact* was laid for explaining all that we read concerning the interpretation that was afterwards put by them upon that part of the Hebrew prophecies, which relates to the exalted dignity of Christ. St. Paul speaks of this dignity as being "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*" Assuming the fact to be so, no proclamation of an earthly king's accession to His throne could be more significant of the event than was the first exercise of Divine power by Christ on the day of Pentecost, as above described. Our faculties remaining what they are, and putting all the circumstances of it together, the Apostles could hardly have desired a higher or better evidence.

For all  
that a  
writer on  
*evidences*  
has to do  
is to show  
that the  
facts were  
believed  
by those  
present.

Now, as we have so often urged, all that a writer upon the evidences, as strictly taken, can do, and all, indeed, that he ought to attempt, is to show that the feasible *facts* related in the New Testament were believed at the very time by those who were present at them. If these were deceived, it could not be as to what was seen and felt and heard, but only as to what was inferred by the hearers. It is not, then, the material grounds of this belief, so much as the way in which mankind would reason upon those grounds, and the conclusions or inferences that were drawn from the events

by the Apostles, which is the proper question here at issue, according to the more forensic view of the subject before us. As in other parts of the Gospel history, so in this great miracle to which we have been advertising, the Apostles, and all who were present, may conceivably have judged erroneously, but their *senses* cannot have possibly deceived them. As to this last point of the Pentecostal manifestations, the fact would seem to stand on evidence as complete and certain, to say the least, as any one of the miracles recorded in Scripture; for there is none which was more universally believed at the time, or of which the effects were more lasting and important; and we may add that there is not any more directly involving the specific doctrine built upon it. The whole of the matter in question, including both the proofs and conclusion, cannot be better summed up than it is in the last chapter of St. Mark: "*And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*" This was the substance of our Lord's promise to His disciples before He quitted them. St. Mark proceeds to say, "*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*"



Which account for the universal belief of first Christians in the Lord's authority over the Church.

Connecting these words with the illustrious event in which the fulfilment of our Lord's promise was signalized, it seems to me that we have here, at least, the complete explanation of the grounds from which the universal belief of the first Christians in Christ's supreme and permanent authority over His Church took its origin.

NOTE, p. 258.

PENTECOST.

Joel ii. 28.

The author did not need for his present point to cite the memorable words, *In those*, the latter or Messianic days, *I, Jehovah, will no longer stint but pour out My, Holy, vide Targum, Spirit*, not upon selected Israelites only, but upon *all flesh* of every condition, *so that your disciples shall see visions and your teachers dreams* once more; and *this even upon My slaves and on My handmaids*, when become Mine; with much more. In the correspondence with such words of the Pentecostal phenomena, men must at once have owned the 'finger of God,' for doubtless these had been exhibited to Joel's mental eye with the evidence of which such were capable; whereas the *central* fact of a descent (or condescension) of a Power, now first shown to be a Divine Subsistence or Personation, could never have been reduced to adequate figure or symbol, however its accessories might have been foreshown to a created intellect.

This crown or seal of the Gospel dispensation, as evidenced in the sensible disposal by the crucified Jesus of a Divine nature, the more immediate vicar or executive, it is sometimes said, in the Trinity, showed at once the true place of the Holy Spirit to the wise. This would prove especially the case with those whose intellects had been raised on high by the lure of the imperishable beauty, *Pulcritudo tam antiqua et tam nova*. No need here to indicate the correspondence of this prophet, said to have first used the terms 'remnant,' 'judgment,' 'day of the Lord,' etc., with others and with the Apocalypse.

The series, however, of transcendent sights or scenes is not to be limited to the single day on which it opened. Luke had doubtless been influenced by interior movement, and by that spirit of reserve, and indeed of abatement far more than of exaggeration, by which divine men have been wont to disclose things ineffable, in the interest even of many to whom such matter was to be opened; while the words would not the less be significant for the 'wise,' who would not be injured *miscendo sacra profanis*. The phenomena, discussions, results of a period were probably given here foreshortened, or in perspective, under the possible conduct of St. Paul.

By occasion of the 'Holy Spirit' occurs the thought of the ancient *spiritus*, or *anima mundi*, alone known to Hegel and his initiates. This last was so little the former that it had not been heard by serious persons, "that any 'Holy' Spirit was at all," for this was come precisely to displace or redress the *spiritus mundi*, if such, as some have held, there be.

Still less can there be any question, in relation with Pentecostal signs, of alleged phenomena of so-called "spiritism"—a little plague, it would seem, broken out among the materialists.—ED.

## CHAPTER IX.

### USE OF PROPHECY AS APPLIED TO THE PROOF OF DOCTRINE.

Effect of previous preparation on the reception of doctrines—Preparation necessary—Illustration—Difficulty of proof—Types—Direct prophecies—Divine nature of Christ—His Sacrifice—Difficulty proposed—Typical prophecies.

I HAVE before had occasion to observe that, however extraordinary we suppose any event to be, or however beside the observable course of nature, mankind nevertheless would have no difficulty in believing it to have happened, on proper testimony, if, previous to its coming to pass, an expectation of such marvel had generally prevailed. There may be some events which it would be difficult to make mankind expect at all, but none which having been, in fact, expected beforehand, would be deemed too incredible, when presented, to be believed. A person who should have expected an event before it happened, and refuse afterwards to believe it, on no other ground than that it was metaphysically incredible, would surely be chargeable with inconsistency, for no one actually expects what he deems incredible *per se*.

This remark, as a little reflection will show, is as true, *mutatis mutandis*, when applied to the belief of mankind in matters of *opinion*, as in matters of fact. Be a doctrine supposed to be ever so unlikely, or ever so remote from the conjectures of reason, yet we have

No fact, whatever, if expected beforehand could be deemed incredible.

This may be applied to some belief in matters of opinion,

only to borrow the same hypothesis, and suppose a revelation of it to have been more or less anticipated in the prevailing opinion of a large portion of mankind, and the anticipation of the doctrine to be revealed will occupy exactly the same place in the proof of its Divine authority, as the previous expectation in the case of any miraculous event. Certain marks of its Divine authority must be presupposed to be fore-shown, by which it could be identified ; but these being assumed, the effect would be the same. Call them prejudices, call them popular delusions, if you please ; but when a doctrine came to be revealed with the expected marks upon it, and more especially if it fell in with established ways of thinking among those to whom it was proposed, in that case men would not argue about its fitness or its probability, but only whether it was or was not the very proposition which they had been prepared to expect.

wherever  
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tion of a  
revelation  
holds the  
place of  
previous  
expecta-  
tion of  
fact ;

Here, then, the previous *expectation* would stand with the many, in the place of all general reasonings, as to its intrinsic conceivability. And in the case where we suppose the fact itself of such a Divine communication to have been already admitted, and the question to be as to its import or meaning only, such expectation would universally be considered, and practically would really be a proof from heaven beforehand of the doctrine also ; an evidence of its probability more demonstrative, with mankind at large, than any abstract argument. The effect of such a prophecy upon the opinion of mankind in the evidence for miracles by the hand of heaven, I have already adverted to ; but I am also much inclined to think that, in the case of *doctrines* asserted to be from above, the influence of a prepared belief would be of equal force.

For these communications stand in the same relation to our reason, that miracles do to our sensible experience; and if it be true that mankind would hardly have been brought to believe, in those days, in the Divine authority of the strange *facts* related in the New Testament unless the previous expectation of a revelation from God had been created by the prophecies of the Old Testament, it is not less probable that, without a similar preparation in respect of the subject-matter of that revelation itself, they would not have been easily brought to believe in its *doctrines* when proposed. The more remote we suppose the doctrines to be from the conclusions deducible from our natural reason, the greater, of course, would be the necessity for such a preparatory dispensation. But the hypothesis of a preparatory dispensation of some sort would seem to enter into the very theory of a doctrinal revelation also; without it I do not very well see on what kind of evidence the *Divine* authority of any proposition could be so brought home, or be made so certainly known to the human mind as to create responsibility on the part of the subject.

At all events, the general proposition, which is all that I am concerned to explain, will hardly be disputed: that if the doctrines preached by the Apostles be supposed to have fallen in with the popular persuasion among the Jews; and to have suggested a not inconsistent fulfilment of the promises on which, as we know, their expectation had been so long and so anxiously suspended, such circumstance must have greatly facilitated their reception of Christianity. "The *law*," says St. Paul, "was," but was no more than "our schoolmaster or tutor to conduct us to Christ." This expression affords an exact commentary upon the

it may, at least, have facilitated reception of truths with Jews.

meaning of his words. It is a brief statement of a fact which might be illustrated from every page of the New Testament. If any one doubts it, he has only to reverse the supposition, and the truth of St. Paul's words will be immediately apparent.

Even for the reception of the Gospel, some education of belief was required at first.

Suppose, then, that Jesus, instead of appearing among the people of Judæa, had suddenly opened his commission at Rome, or among a people who were strangers to the Promises of God; to whom the name of a Messiah was unknown; who had never heard such words as Atonement, Salvation, Kingdom of Heaven, Resurrection, Faith, Sin, Repentance, and other phrases peculiar to the Jewish theology; and under which were signified various specific ideas without which the truths or even terminology of the New Testament could hardly be made intelligible, as is found, in fact, with heathen races; in this case it is evident how many impediments the Apostles would have had to contend with. But if from words we come to things, and suppose that when they propounded the high and difficult affirmations which it was their business to communicate—the Divine Nature of Christ, His Vicarious Sufferings, His Intercession at the right hand of God, our Sanctification and Salvation through faith in His name,—if the Apostles had been left unprovided with any proofs whatever except the facts, miraculous indeed, which they attested, but performed elsewhere, and their own inspired knowledge of the several truths which those facts were designed to testify,—here the difficulty becomes apparent. It is, indeed, just conceivable that a knowledge of these truths might have been miraculously infused into the minds of their hearers (as it must have been into their own); but it is difficult to imagine in what other



way such propositions as the Apostles published could have been even explained. Some education of belief on the part of mankind would seem to have been required; and this, in the promulgation of the Gospel, was certainly provided. The Old Testament was an authority admitted undoubtingly by the Jews themselves—so that the question was not with them whether miracles were credible, or a revelation possible, or whether any other abstract proposition was true or false, but simply regarded the true meaning of the prophecies.

But here a difficulty presents itself, which before proceeding farther it will be convenient to consider. It will be obvious, on a very slight examination of the very nature of prophecy, that the proper subject of this must always be some *matter of fact*; something which is to come to pass in time and place under the senses of man. But how are—not facts but so many general propositions?—how are truths and doctrines to be prophesied? “*Qui potest provideri,*” asks Cicero, “*quidquam futurum esse, quod neque causam habet ullam, neque notam, cum futurum sit?*” Historical events may be predicted, and the truth of the prediction may be brought to a test. The destruction of Babylon, the division of the empire of Alexander among his chief captains, might be prophesied—the facts would happen, or they would not. But the truth of a theorem, of one of Euclid’s propositions, for example, could not be prophesied: this is a matter to be demonstrated; no other test of such truth can be applied. The distinction is obvious, and hardly requires to be explained.

Truths,  
indeed,  
cannot be  
predicted  
as such,  
in the  
same way  
as facts;

In reference, however, to the difficulty which it may yet may, in  
at first seem to present, I would observe, that although a manner,  
be made

subjects of theorems cannot as such be predicted, yet there are nevertheless two ways, though oblique ones, in which they *may* become legitimate subjects of prophecy.

For (1)  
they may  
be *fore-*  
*shown*  
under  
types;

I. Though they cannot be foretold, yet they may be foreshown; that is, they may be represented to the understanding under forms of types and of symbolical actions, with an intimation that the true signification of them shall hereafter, at some assigned period and under certain predicted circumstances, be clearly revealed.

For example: when Christ delivered the parable of the Sower to His disciples, they did not at first comprehend its meaning; but the moment the key was put into their hands, the import of the figure under which the true sense of it was concealed, became as plain as if it had been couched in common language. Now this explanation of it was given by our Saviour in *time and place*. It was an action of His life which we can conceive to have been foretold. This may be made still clearer.

Our Saviour told His disciples “*that the kingdom of heaven was like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which when it was full they drew to the shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away.*” Now, supposing that with a view to represent the mixture of good and bad men which would belong to God’s future Church under the Gospel dispensation, the high priest had been directed every year to cast a net into the sea of Galilee, as here described—this would have been a type, the meaning of which it would have been impossible to interpret, had not our Saviour’s words furnished us with a key, viz. the Kingdom of Heaven: the future *communication* of this key was a point of fact,

which might have been made the subject of a distinct prediction. This custom of expressing general truths under some significant action was not peculiar to Scripture, but was common among other nations as well as the Jewish. As, for instance, Livy tells us, whenever the Roman consul appeared in any assembly of the people, he bowed the fasces; "*vocato ad concilium populo, summissis fascibus in concionem ascendit.*" Now this was strictly a symbol, that the supreme authority was vested in the Roman people, signifying a truth which it might have been made only to *foreshow* in the case of a revelation to be made one day in such matter.

In this way, then, it is plain that matters of doctrine, also, are capable of being ingrafted upon a prophetical scheme, for they may be directly foreshown in parabolical allusions and representative rites, or other scenical actions.

II. Matters of doctrine may also be made the subject of prophecy in an indirect or oblique manner. I mean by this, that although the *truth* of a mystery cannot be directly predicted, yet the future *belief* of mankind in its truth, however abstruse, is not the same thing, for the *fact* of this belief obtaining everywhere might, without doubt, be foretold. For this mental assent is a matter of fact which might come to pass in time and place, just as any other historical event. Let us put the case. Suppose, then, a revelation to have been promised, and to have been many years looked forward to, the several doctrines of which had in the mean time been advisedly veiled under types and figurative representations, known to involve a meaning which was to be disclosed only at a stated period; suppose this period to have been defined beforehand

or (2) the future belief of man in such doctrine may be foretold as a fact.

by the fulfilment of certain fixed signs, for which the minds of men had been prepared:—now, if at the expected time these signs were manifested, and on the strength of the recognition of them large multitudes of men, in all parts of the world, had been brought to abandon the religious discipline in which they had been born and bred for a certain number of principles found to correspond with those types and shadows and allusions, now for the first time made clear to the apprehension of mankind;—here would seem to be a case in which not only the fact of faith, but also doctrines, had evidently been made the subject of prophecy; not, however, here considered as truths, but simply as propositions, which would come to be received as revealed, or true, and that with incalculable effects. In this way, then, though obliquely, the Divineness of the authority on which a doctrinal proposition had been received might be as well known as the mental illumination of the Prophet, by which the belief in the same had been predicted; and the more unexpected the doctrine itself, and above the guesses of reason, the stronger, in such case, would now be the presumption of its having come from God.

I shall produce some examples from the Old Testament, which will perhaps make my meaning more clear, and at the same time throw light upon the process of proof, by which the leading tenets of our faith may be presumed to have been gradually embraced by the understanding, and finally established. For example, the Divine nature of Christ, in relation to our knowledge, is not so much a fact as a proposition; and, as such, its truth could not be made the subject of a direct prediction. It is, however, not a proposition at all, but a fact, that Divine worship

Thus it was foretold that Messiah should be worshipped as God, and

is now paid to Him, and has been so paid from the beginning. Even if it could be shown to be contrary to reason to speak of our Lord as if He were a properly Divine Being, it is not at all the less a fact that He is now so spoken of; that He is now and has been always CALLED and adored as God. this has come to pass.

Let us then turn to the Scriptures. We find in Isaiah these words: "*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be CALLED Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*" <sup>1</sup> Scriptures quoted to this effect.

Take another passage from the prophet Jeremiah: Jeremiah.  
 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His NAME whereby He shall be CALLED, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." <sup>2</sup>

In the last of these passages the words in the Hebrew are, "Jehovah our Righteousness;" and both it and the passage from Isaiah are distinctly referred to Messiah in the Targum of Jonathan: there is no question, then, about the sense in which they were understood by the ancient Jewish Church. It is no

<sup>1</sup> Ch. ix. 2, 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xxiii. 5, 6.



less certainly a fact that from the days of the Apostles to the present time, our Saviour has at least been *called* "The mighty God," that "*the name whereby* He has been *called*" is "The Lord our Righteousness." Here, then, is a case in which a doctrinal proposition may be engrafted upon a prediction. For a *belief* at least of the Divinity of the future Messiah is among the facts that were prophesied in the Jewish Scripture.

Isaiah.

Again, let us open the Old Testament at that passage of Isaiah<sup>1</sup> in which the sacrifice and propitiation of Christ are so openly signified. I may state that every verse of this chapter is separately referred to the Messiah by the ancient Jewish Church. So stringent is the passage itself, as well as the tradition of the Synagogue on this point, that their later writers have been constrained to invent the doctrine of *two* Messiahs,<sup>2</sup> of whom one, they say, was to appear in a state of poverty and humiliation, riding upon an ass, and the other in the clouds of heaven, as a king and conqueror.

I have before adverted to that part of Isaiah's prophecies in which the future death and humiliation of Christ were foretold. Here not only is the event itself foretold, but its meaning also is explained; and the two are so bound up together as to make it difficult to understand in what way it would be possible for a person to believe the prophecy to have been fulfilled by the death and sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth, and to draw from it any other explanation, except the doctrine which the Church has always entertained.

The Messiah was to be cut off from the land of the living; He was to be taken from prison and from judgment; He was to be led like a sheep to the

<sup>1</sup> Ch. liii.

<sup>2</sup> See Note C, p. 200.

slaughter :—and the *cause* of this was the transgressions of His people ; for their iniquities He was to be bruised ; the chastisement of their peace was to be upon Him, and with His stripes they were to be healed. Moreover, He was to bear the sins of many, and to make intercession for the transgressors. Now these propositions could not be made the direct subject of prophecy by any method but in the shape of *types*, such as the scape-goat, the sacrifice of Isaac, the sprinkling of the blood of the victims, or other similar parabolical representations. But supposing the ideas themselves, couched under the word Atonement, to have been in this way already made intelligible, the great doctrine of our Lord's Propitiation is so combined with the prediction of His death and humiliation, as to be indirectly prophesied with as clear an evidence, as if this great truth had been a direct matter of fact.

We, who see this doctrine established in the belief of the whole Christian Church, may now be satisfied to receive it without going behind the words of the Apostles. For the most part Christians in the present day seek no better proof, neither is it necessary that they should. But at the first introduction of Christianity, the value of this personal word, instead of being a conceded point, was one among the subjects in debate. Even those who did not question the sincerity of the Apostles, would yet have questioned the sobriety of their understandings, if they had affirmed such mysteries as this of the Atonement, and still more the great doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, simply on the authority of their own opinion and belief. But with the facts, as related in the New Testament, fresh in their memories, and with the prophecies of the Old

We, who see this doctrine universally established, need go no further than the Apostles, but in those days it needed other proof.

Testament in their hands, they were furnished with the true key by means of which they professed to reveal, and, as the event has proved, succeeded in revealing, the whole mystery couched in the legal rites, and the meaning of the truths which, veiled under the shape of types, occupied so large a place in it. The suddenness of the light which broke in upon the understandings of our Lord's followers, and its effect upon their feelings after His resurrection, when He first opened their eyes to the real import of the Scriptures, are affectingly described by St. Luke in the last chapter of his Gospel, in which he relates Christ's last discourse on earth immediately before His ascension.

Having made these remarks upon the use of prophecy as an evidence of revealed truth, and upon the place which the *doctrines* of the Gospel hold in the scheme of the Old Testament, I shall now proceed to examine a practical difficulty in the way of what I have been saying, which I am unwilling to pass over in silence. The difficulty is this : that in accounting for the readiness with which the doctrines of the Gospel were at first received, as having been founded or conditioned on a previous dispensation, I seem to introduce an hypothesis which casts a doubt upon their Divine origin.

But such expectation, it might be urged, would admit human invention.

For thus it may be argued. If the original belief of mankind was not derived *immediately* from supposed Divine inspiration, as attested by the miracles which they alleged, but from certain preconceived notions prevailing at the time, as well in their own minds as in the minds of others, by what rule can we be sure that the doctrines of the Gospel are revelations from God at all, and not merely human opinions.

founded, as a thousand other opinions are, only on popular prejudice? This is a view which has been put forward by some, who, admitting the Divine mission of Christ, reject the doctrines laid down in the Epistles of St. Paul, and in other parts of the New Testament. These doctrines, say they, formed already a part of the popular belief of the Jews, before the evidence by which they are supposed to be proved had any existence. It has been contended, therefore, that the foundation of them rested originally, not upon Divine, but upon human authority ; or at least upon such a mixture of both, as to render it impossible to distinguish between the two.

This objection would seem at first sight to be fairly urged. I have assumed that the truths of the Gospel, as generally understood by ourselves, would not have met at the outset with so favourable a hearing, except they had fallen in with certain popular habits of thinking and speaking. They may, therefore, so far be said to have been founded on those popular habits of thinking and speaking, inasmuch as if they had been presented to a people, who, as I have said, had never before heard of such things as a propitiatory sacrifice—of the remission of sins—of salvation—of a kingdom of heaven—of a resurrection from the dead,—it is probable that by no process of reasoning could the Apostles have been able to explain to their hearers the meaning of the doctrines which they preached. Indeed, the history of the Church before, at least, the fall of Jerusalem, show that the Apostles could only teach explicitly these things to those who, by their reception, were reputed the “perfect,” “thoroughly initiated,” to whom they could explain “the *whole* counsel of God.” Now if, indeed, the antecedent

The  
objection  
might seem  
plausible,

notions of the Jews and Judaizing heathens had been derived merely from popular error and mere superstition (and there is no medium between this supposition and a *Divine* revelation), it is plain that the whole diathesis of the reasoning would have been vitiated. For no *after*-evidence would have given a Divine character to conclusions which had been drawn from merely human premises ; like Nebuchadnezzar's image, whose "feet were part of iron and part of clay," it would have fallen to pieces from the mere want of cohesion in its parts ; no subsequent process could have invested them, in the opinion of mankind, with the character of *inspired* truths.

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But quite other than this is the hypothesis on which the proper truths of the Gospel stand. In this the Divine origin of the types and ceremonial rites of the Law both was and is taken for granted, and the popular notions and belief arising out of them assumed to have been the preconcerted effects of Divine wisdom. All I now say is, that if the Jews were right, and if the notions and ways of thinking prevailing in those days among them were the consequence of a previous miraculous dispensation, in that case the vulgar belief of the time, instead of being for them any motive for distrusting the truth of the Gospel doctrines, forms part of the very evidence by which the proof of the Divine authority of these tenets may be maintained ; and it is a kind of evidence which no skill or cunning on the part of human agents could have contrived. Those who disbelieved the facts related by the Apostles might have charged them with having availed themselves of the state of popular opinion to promote their ends by fictitious facts ; this may be just conceived, but certainly none but God alone could have purposely



*prepared* this state of mind many generations before. Viewed in the light of a preparatory dispensation, this part of the hypothesis of the design of the Old Testament is essentially and demonstrably Divine. Looking at it, not in detail, but as a scheme, organized with relation to its intended purpose, the difficulty, if in such case we may use the term, plainly was, so to adjust its parts, as to illumine the minds of the Jews with only a partial knowledge of the revelation to be communicated. The question was, how little of present light would suffice for the purpose of enabling men to recognize its truth, when the time should arrive for revealing this more fully; and not how much God was able, without prejudice to them, or to His plan, to communicate. If the minds of men in general were to be prepared for a reception of such high doctrines, it is evident that some approximation at least to the truth to be actually made known was necessary. The mere expectation of a revelation of *some* kind was not enough in the case of doctrines so difficult of apprehension as those which we find in the Gospel. Habits of thinking, therefore, and trains of ideas were, withal, to be created, without which, as we have seen, the propositions to be announced would hardly, if at all, have been understood.

It was no less expedient, on the other hand, that the knowledge of the actual truth should be kept back. If the Jews had known it beforehand, that of the Gospel, when it came, would to them have been no revelation. The advent of Christ, and the miracles which He performed, instead of explaining or opening the Scriptures, would themselves have required to be accounted for and explained; would have embarrassed rather than have assisted the faith of mankind. But

The Divine economy required that these should be obscurely shown.

I have already shown elsewhere, that unless the clear meaning of many of the prophecies had been concealed until after their fulfilment, the proof of their Divine inspiration could never have been established. If we apply the same reasoning to those parts of the Old Testament which relate to the *truths* that were thereafter to be laid open, we shall see that in their case the same method will hold good throughout. No truth which had been understood and believed beforehand, would have been able to stand on the evidence of fulfilled prophecy. This principle, as we saw, will apply to a large class of *facts*; but, as applied to *truths*, it is absolute. Taking prophecy as a concerted scheme, it requires to be in parts obscure; for this is a condition attaching to the nature of the evidence, and without it the demonstration of *Divine* illumination would seem to be, in many instances, impracticable.

But intelligible at once, when revealed.

It was said by Cicero, when speaking of certain rules of rhetoric, that there were some which people in general could not have discovered, but which any man might comprehend when pointed out to him: "*Nam neque tam est acris acies in naturis hominum et ingeniis, ut res tantas quisquam, nisi monstratas, possit videre: neque tanta tamen in rebus obscuritas, ut eas non penitus acri vir ingenio cernat si modo ad spexerit.*"

Of which the most perfect case is typical prophecy.

This exactly defines the perfection of a typical prophecy, of which the object is supposed to be some proposition only hereafter to be known and believed. Under whatever form the truth may be foreshown (whether in some symbolical action, or parable, or figurative representation of any kind), it must be under one which could not have been divined beforehand, but which is immediately apprehended as soon

as its real meaning is suggested to the mind. This end can be directly obtained only by the aid of types of some sort, and in some shape or other ; and it is to this use that they are appropriated in the Old Testament. Here one and the selfsame key—*the spiritual or supernatural character of Christ's kingdom and office*—was to open the meaning, not of one, but of many prophecies ; not of one doctrine, nor one passage of God's dealings with mankind, but of many doctrines and many passages ; and the wonder is, not that there should be so much obscurity in the Old Testament, but that, under all the circumstances, there should not have been still more.



## PART III.

STATE OF THE ARGUMENT AFTER THE  
DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.





## PART III.

### CHAPTER I.

#### JEWISH OPINIONS RESPECTING THE FUTURE CHRIST.

Buxtorf's "Synag. Judaica"—Two Messiahs—Jewish view of blessings of Messiah's kingdom—Jewish mode of spiritual interpretation—The Gospel interpretation not new—Instances—The end and design of the Old Testament—Its typical and symbolical character.

At the end of Joh. Buxtorf's "Synagoga Judaica," is a chapter entitled, "De Venturo Judæorum Messiâ," in which he gives a detailed account of the expected blessings which the Jews look forward to enjoy, when their promised Messiah shall appear. The dissertation is full of curious matter, containing chapter and verse for every statement, and well worth the trouble of reading. It is of moderate length; I shall, however, content myself with merely referring to it, with a view to some short remarks in further illustration of the reasoning contained in the preceding Chapters, upon the belief of the Jewish Church, and upon the state of the argument for the truth of Christianity, at the moment when it was first planted in the world—before it had begun to make a noticeable appearance in the eyes of men—while the belief in it was only a seed

Buxtorf on  
Talmudic  
matters.

just beginning to spring up—and when its origin, its character, its future destiny, and every point connected with it, must have been a matter of speculation even in the minds of the Apostles themselves.

Messianic  
view of  
prophecies  
borne out  
by Tal-  
mud,

Although the authorities produced by Buxtorf are taken from the Talmud, the compilation of which was posterior to the time of Christ, yet there is not the least reason for supposing that any material change has taken place in the theological belief of the Jews since that period. The success of Christianity and the evident clearness with which it may be shown, that all the terms fixed in Scripture, for limiting the time of the Messiah's coming, are now passed by, has forced their learned men upon the necessity of adopting one or two opinions, probably unknown to their ancient Church ;—as it has compelled them to change their interpretations of some passages of Scripture, which before the time of Christ were understood in the sense which was put upon them by the Apostles ;—but these innovations are easily distinguished, and do not in the least affect the substance of their doctrine.

except  
where  
Jesus in  
case.

Among them may be mentioned an assertion to which I have before adverted, that there were to be two Messiahs ;—one whom they call the son of Joseph, who was to be a suffering Messiah,<sup>1</sup> and who, they say, has appeared ; and another, the Son of David, whose coming is the great object of their faith, and

<sup>1</sup> A curious and probably most ancient mythus, the Hebrew counterpart, possibly, of the Christian legend of the “ wandering Jew,” told how that Messiah has long come, but sat in guise of a beggar at the gates of Rome, symbolizing the treasured thought that Israel, everywhere outcast and disseminated throughout the Roman Empire, only sat watching the day of reprisal on *Edom*, the kingdom not of God but of “ iniquity.”—ED.

under whom all the glorious promises, which the Scriptures make to their nation, are to receive their accomplishment. Now the present hopes of the Jews, in regard to this, their triumphant Messiah, are beyond any doubt substantially the same, in most points, as have been entertained by them, from a period certainly anterior to Christianity. His coming, say they, has been delayed on account of their impenitence ; but it has been delayed only ; the promise still remains uncanceled ; and among the petitions which are put up daily by them in their synagogues, one always is, that it may be shortly, and in their days, fulfilled.

With respect to the several blessings which we find mentioned in the Talmud, as composing the future condition of the Jews, under their promised king,—there is proof that they were substantially the same before the coming of Christ as at the present time. It is chiefly in that part of their belief, which refers to the vengeance which God will take upon the enemies of His people, that the Talmudical doctors have introduced inventions of their own, and given the rein to their imaginations.

First, they are persuaded that the Messiah, when He comes, will gather together, from every quarter of the heavens, all the dispersed of their nation in every quarter of the world, as it is written in Jeremiah :<sup>1</sup> “ Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together : a great company shall return thither.” From these words they infer, if any, while alive, were deaf, or

Messianic  
millen-  
nium.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xxxi. 8.

lame, or blind, that when the Messiah shall restore them to life (as He will do, to all the children of Abraham, throughout the world, and conduct them to their own land), all their infirmities will be healed; for then, as Isaiah writes,<sup>1</sup> “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” The general doctrine of a resurrection to life they build upon Daniel: <sup>2</sup> “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.”

No more  
disease,  
old age, or  
sin.

In that day, likewise, there shall be none sick, but God will remove all plagues and all diseases from among His people. Moreover, their days will be prolonged to the age of those who lived before the flood. “For as the days of a tree are the days of my people.”<sup>3</sup> God will also not only remove all diseases, but all evil concupiscence and inclinations to evil. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”<sup>4</sup> But lastly, and above all, God in that day will so reveal Himself to the children of His chosen race, as that they shall see Him face to face. “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”<sup>5</sup>

The Lord  
Himself  
revealed.

All in-  
ferred from  
some texts  
quoted by  
Apostles.

I omit the long account given by Buxtorf of the feast, which the Messiah is to give to all the assembled Jews. It has probably a foundation in some ancient tradition, connected with the texts of Scripture which they adduce; but it is so absurd, both in itself and in

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xxxv. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lxxv. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xl. 5.



its details, and is so plainly marked with the extravagant imagination, which disfigures the inventions of the more recent Synagogue, that I shall pass it over as irrelevant to the present question,—which is only concerned with the opinion of their Church, at the earlier period when the writings of the New Testament were composed. Of the antiquity of all the other particulars embodied in the expectation of the Jews, proof may be produced from other sources, besides those which Buxtorf adduces. But, indeed, no better evidence is required than the texts of Scripture on which each several promise is alleged. For these, we may have observed, are the selfsame texts as are commonly produced by the Apostles in reference to their interpretation of God's promises:—a coincidence which is easily explained, by supposing that the reasoning of both was built, as beyond any doubt it was, upon one and the same, so to speak, catechetical foundation.

That many, perhaps the majority of the religious portion of the Jewish nation, expected the above promises to be fulfilled in some literal sense, need not be doubted. Nevertheless it is not conceivable, but that there must have been very numerous exceptions. Indeed, we know this to have been the case, upon the authority of the Evangelists. They tell us of a whole class of Jews, who expressly denied that there would be any resurrection of the dead when the Messiah came. Others, we must suppose, would reject other parts of the popular belief; while some would regard the whole, as containing only a figurative description of that “world to come,” that *αἰὼν μέλλον*, which was then, as it has ever been among the Jews, the one great subject of faith; indeed, the only article of *faith*,

Sadducees  
the only  
exception.

properly so called, unless we except that of the Divine Unity, which their creed contains.

So that a new order was quite credible *per se*, though it might not turn out as looked for.

Be this, however, as it may—whatever was the state of the public mind in Judæa, at the time when Christ appeared—yet as preached among a people accustomed to believe, or to listen to others who believed in the future revelation of such a state of things, as has been just now described, the interpretation of God's promises, which was proposed by the Apostles, was far from incredible. If it seemed startling, it must have been so, from its sobriety rather than its extravagance. Putting aside altogether the proofs adduced for the truth of the more spiritual interpretation, as arising out of the great and wonderful events, of which so many had been witnesses; and leaving the question to be determined only by reason and probability,—the Christian doctrine, as to the true nature of the Messiah's kingdom, was plainly, if not to Jews, yet, *per se*, the less unlikely of the two; less directly subversive of all that we should deduce by experience, or conjecture from reason, of the thoughts and ways of God. Disappointing, in the highest degree, the doctrine preached by the Apostles must have no doubt been to a people whose minds had been filled with the imaginations of the Rabbins; but not exceeding belief on any other grounds, for this principle of a spiritual sense under the mere letter was then no new or unauthorized method of interpretation.

Which would be accounted for by the spiritual sense recognized in the Synagogue :

And here it may be well to pause, and to consider, for a few pages, more fully, the import of a principle of interpretation which is even now, and always has been, recognized among the Jews. It would be easy to show this, by citing instances where their writers explain the meaning of the several parts of their Law,

as typifying particular truths ; and examples in abundance are produced by Schoettgen in his dissertation "De Hierosolyma Cælesti."<sup>1</sup>

The source from which this part of Jewish theology took its rise, is found in the Old Testament. When Moses was taken up into the Mount,<sup>2</sup> the Jews believe that God then showed him<sup>3</sup> the "patterns" from which the form of the ark, and all the various things with which it was to be furnished, were to be severally copied. This is alluded to in the Epistle to the Hebrews,<sup>4</sup> where St. Paul speaks of the Law as having "the mere shadow of good things of the invisible world, and not the very image or portrait of the things." It was a well-known tradition, and the Apostle plainly assumes it, as a thing admitted and understood. The same allusion occurs in other places, where the writers of the New Testament speak of the "Jerusalem which is above;" the "heavenly Jerusalem;"—the "Jerusalem which is the mother of us all;" the "Jerusalem which now is," the "New Jerusalem;" showing, by the way in which they use the words, that they were not proposing any new doctrine, but speaking of one which was familiarly known.

What I have just said will not only prove that the Jews, at the time when Christ came, were accustomed to the principle of interpretation asserted by the Apostles, but will also explain what it was, which they understood by it.<sup>5</sup> We are not, however, to suppose that this principle was received only by indi-

a principle  
founded on  
vision of  
Moses on  
the mount,

but re-  
ceived by  
all, and  
the basis  
of the Ca-  
bala ;

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 1205.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxvi. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. ix. 23 ; x. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Kabal* or *kibel* = *receptum*, "received," meaning "*ore receptum*;" nearly = *traditio* and *regula fidei* in Tertullian. With the Hebrews the *kabal* primarily meant all what was the matter of the Talmud and Zohar prior to the two compilations. The

viduals, or confined to the things which related to the service of the Temple. It was sanctioned by the whole body of their learned men, and adopted by them as the foundation of an entire system. Whether it should be called a theological or philosophical system, it may be difficult to say. Such as it is, however, it is not altogether without merit as an ingenious hypothesis, though known by a name which has mostly become a proverb of reproach among other philosophers and theologians. The science I am speaking of, is the famous Cabala.<sup>1</sup> I am not concerned with the conclusions of this science, about which I know little or nothing, but only with the principle on which the science, whether wise or foolish, is built.

so that the  
world  
below a  
copy of

“When God created this lower world,” says R. Simeon Ben Jochai (quoted by Schoettgen from the Zohar Exod. fol. 88, col. 360), “He created it according

term “cabal” was also applied in the same intention to the Law itself as it came to be fixed in *writing*, though the interpretation of this was ever held subject to the sense notorious to the original recipients, much as early writers speak at times of the New Testament as but so much oral knowledge *fixed* at the time, and so handed down in the Churches. The great depôt of the lore which from its more arcane quality has popularly come to monopolize this name of cabala, is the sepher Zohar, “Liber Splendoris;” in this much of the recondite thought of those sages who, living under the Law, belonged to the Gospel, was for the first time fixed on paper about A.D. 150, as a choice of evils, by R. Simeon and his school in Palestine; and this, at about the same date, and for motives the same in kind that moved R. Jehuda the Holy to compile the *legal* tradition in the Mischna. All, and indeed more than is easily comprehensible in this very recondite province, will be found in the laborious repertory of Von Rosenroth, the “Cabala Denudata,” 1678; and in the “Harmonie” of Chev. Drach, 1840. The volume of Professor Frank is the sole source apparently known to our recent historians. But he was, if we may trust M. Drach, not at home in the peculiar rabbinical idiom, and had also drawn all his citations from the work of Peter Beer. Frank holds the Cabalists for Pantheists, which Drach, with show of reason, denies.—ED.

<sup>1</sup> Vide Note A.—ED.

to the pattern of the world above, in order that this world might be the image of the world above; and His reason for so doing was, that the one world might be connected with the other." Assuming this as a fact, the more learned of the Jews have divided all human knowledge into two principal parts; of which the one is embodied in their Talmud, where men may learn the practical parts of Divine truth; but for the truth itself, they must consult their cabalistical writers, by whom the original principles of all things are explained.

As I am now upon a subject in which it is easy to proceed beyond my depth, I shall avail myself of the account given us by Reuchlin, of this part of the Jewish theology, in his treatise "*De Arte Cabalisticâ*," as printed with Galatinus "*De Arcanis*," 1561. We may find the same account in other writers who have treated of the subject; but Reuchlin drew his knowledge from the fountain-head, which few, except himself, would seem to have thought necessary. "*Quidquid*," he says, "*de Sacrâ Scripturâ homines optimarum artium amatores, scientiâ naturali addiscunt, auro bono par est et appellatur OPUS DE BRESITH. Quod vero scientiâ spirituali recipimus, OPUS DE MERCHAVA dicitur, et auro æquatur optimo et purissimo. Scribunt enim Cabalistæ, quod OPUS DE BRESITH est sapientia naturæ; OPUS DE MERCHAVA est sapientia divinitatis. Et quoniam utraque scientia utcumque circa mundum et ea quæ consistunt in mundo, versatur; estque Talmudistarum et Cabalistarum, eâ in re, unanimis arbitratus, quod duo sunt mundi: primus, intellectualis, qui vocatur עולם הבא, id est, mundus ille futurus (tantum) quoad nos; et secundus, sensibilis, qui dicitur עולם הזה, id est, mundus iste præsens, ut ex verbis sapientum nostro-*



*rum recepimus . . . . Idcirco dividuntur Talmudici et Cabalistæ, secedentes in duas facultates, tametsi ex creditis receptionibus ambæ similiter oriantur et emanent. Nam utrique majorum suorum traditionibus fidem habent, nullâ ratione redditâ. Sed hac distinguuntur disputationis ordinatione, quod omne studium, omnem operam universamque mentis suæ intentionem, Cabalista a mundo sensibili, finaliter ad mundum intellectualem, transfert et traducit. Talmudista autem, in mundo sensibili permanet, ac animum universi hujus mundi non transcendit; quod si quando licenter ad Deum et beatos spiritus pergat, non tamen Deum ipsum ut immanentem et absolutum accedit, sed ut opificem causamque rerum et circa sua creata occupatum . . . . Igitur altiore loco et digniore gradu habendi sunt Cabalistæ. . . .”*

Zohar.

The above passages are put into the mouth of a supposed descendant of R. Simeon in a conference held with a Platonist and Averroist at Frankfort. R. Simeon was a disciple of the famous R. Akibah, so deeply committed in the revolt of Barcochba under Hadrian, in the second century. The immediate disciples of R. Simeon are supposed to have compiled the Zohar, before quoted, about the year 170. It is to this book that we owe much of the knowledge which we possess concerning the opinions, and especially the abstruser lore of the ancient Jewish Church on, a variety of interesting points. But with respect to the particular point of a hidden sense, which it is my present object to prove, we have an older and still more unquestionably authentic authority, in the testimony of Philo, who was the cotemporary of the Apostles. A large portion of his voluminous writings is entirely devoted to an exposition of the ancient

books upon the principle just now stated ; namely, that all the things, and even persons and facts, however real, which are described in the Old Testament, seem merely as *σύμβολα τῶν νοητῶν*, as he expresses it ; the type or shadow of “ the things unseen,” representing, to our senses, truths that exist as *such* only in our understanding, or in that of separate intelligences.

It would be an endless task to show this by an accumulation of passages from his writings ; but I am tempted to produce one extract, as proving that the supposition of a spiritual meaning being couched under the literal sense of Scripture, was a received notion among the Jews : one so common as to have been abused in the hands of the vulgar, and on that account, calling down the censure of the wiser sort among them.

It seems that the practice of spiritualizing the Philo. Scriptures had extended itself so far in his age as to have led many to disregard the literal meaning altogether, and to neglect, in consequence, the practice of the law.<sup>1</sup> This scandal Philo sharply censures ; and his reproof is characteristic enough of the sort of reverence which Philo himself entertained for positive precepts, of which many had little ethical or philosophical value, the outward observance of which he so strongly recommends. “ Although,” says he, “ all mankind were to agree to call a sick man whole, or a whole man sick, their opinion would not alter the real state of the man. Yet people are not on that

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew mystics, probably, with the common tendency of mystics to go too far in depreciating the value of the simple text or letter. Much to the same effect is found in the Cabala with which Philo was deeply imbued, though qualified in the case of that remarkable man by very important functions of public life, *vide* Note A.

account to break charity or to despise the good opinion of mankind, which deserves regard, as a thing very useful in this life ; and which good opinion always attends those who, contented with things as they are, follow the customs and institutions of their fathers. There are some, who, believing that the written law contains only figures of intelligible truths, study these last very carefully, but altogether neglect the written laws themselves. Now this," he argues, "might be very well, if men were intended to live in solitude ; if they were not members of society ; very well for men who were ignorant of houses and lands and the other conveniences of life, to follow truth, naked as she is in herself ; but we must not forget that the sacred Scriptures teach us not to neglect the opinion of the world, and not to violate laws which divine men, and better than we, have sanctioned." He then goes on to instance particulars. "The Sabbath," says he, "the feasts of the nation, the ceremonies of the holy temple, all these things will be neglected if we attend only to the things signified by such ceremonies, and not to the things themselves. On the contrary, our duty is to regard the written law as the body ; the other, that is, τὰ δι' ὑπονοιῶν δηλούμενα, as the soul ; and to value the former accordingly, as being the house in which the latter resides. In this way," he tells us, "we shall more clearly appreciate even the symbolical meaning, and at the same time escape much blame and ill-will." I have given only the substance of the passage, for the sake of brevity ; but it may be found in the *Treatise περὶ Ἀποικίας*, at p. 450, vol. ii. edit. Mangey.

Philo.

Though Philo was a Jew by nation, yet his writings savour strongly of the Academy, and but slightly

of the Synagogue. His own position is mainly that of a contemplative or a professed philosopher; and there might be reason to doubt whether he considered Moses himself as being much more. I do not remember that an allusion to the promise of a Messiah is to be found in any of his writings.<sup>1</sup> He is called by Clemens of Alexandria, Philo the Pythagorean; but what the object of his writings was—whether to philosophize Judaism, or judaize philosophy—it may be difficult to determine. Possibly both. He seldom refers to the prophecies, and when he does, he speaks of the writers—not in the language one might expect from a Jew—as of men inspired with a knowledge of events to come,—but as *τὶς τῶν ἐταίρων Μωυσέως*, or *τὶς τοῦ προφητικοῦ θιασώτης χοροῦ*. So, also, when he attempts to illustrate the meaning of Moses, by explaining the hidden signification of the rites of the Law,—it is to moral and philosophical truths that he refers. One does well, however, to take into account the *reserve* imposed on the Jews as to their national prophecies, in face of the civil governments under whose jealous eye they dwelled.

But we find little trace of such opinions, or of that class of persons to whom Philo refers in the extract just quoted (so far at least as my own knowledge extends), in any part of the more ancient theology of the Jews.

Maimonides and  
moderns.

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, to be observed that the known works of Philo are exclusively devoted to the vindication of the narrative and precepts of the *Pentateuch*, for this alone was obligatory, or alone *de fide* for all Israel, and by this the Jews were known to the civil governments. The prophetic books, however venerated, were then no more than promises and so not as yet verified. In the “*De Præmiis et Pœnis*,” however (Mangey, ii. 423), he speaks with sufficient clearness for the intelligent of Messiah, though referring to Moses only, while the language of Isaiah recalls perhaps the third Sibylline.—Ed.

The rationalizing or modern school of Jewish theology has Maimonides for its author, who lived in the twelfth century. He has attempted to explain the more obscure parts of Scripture, by supposing such reasons as he could himself find for the different institutions of the Law; and his authority has been quoted with more respect than it really deserves. As an exposition of Jewish theology, properly so called, it is worse than useless, as being founded upon principles, not drawn from any sources of tradition, so much as from Aristotle, or other authorities whom Hillel or Gamaliel, or the compilers of the Zohar or Mischna, would have repudiated. But there is little or no trace of any such philosophical spirit in the writings which have come down to us from the ancient Jewish Church. The truths to which our attention is directed in the Zohar, and which are assumed to be concealed under the representation of visible actions, and sensible images, refer entirely to the revelations, which it was supposed would be openly made, in the times of the Messiah.

Talmud-  
ists also.

When the Talmudists spoke of the "heavenly Jerusalem," or of the "kingdom of heaven," or of "the world to come,"—they signified a state of things to be established on *earth*: they understood these words to express a *temporal* state. When, then, the same words occur in the writings of St. Paul, or of the Apostles, we are there to understand by them a state of things which has, indeed, already commenced under Christ's Church; but the consummation of which will be hereafter, at His second coming to judge the world. As the elucidation of this point is not important to the argument, it may be sufficient to refer the proof to Schoettgen, vol. i. Dissert. v. "De Hierosolyma Cœlesti," c. vi. and Witsius. Exercit. v. "De Monte Agar"



§ 17, 18, and Exercit. v. “*Historia Hierosolymæ*,” § 29. All that I am at present concerned to show is, that in putting a spiritual sense upon the prophecies, the Apostles were not introducing any *new* maxims of interpretation; but were proceeding upon a principle, known familiarly to all the Jews; one fully recognized by the learned, even by those among them who, like Philo, seem to have considered their Scriptures, not in the light of prophecies concerning things to come, but simply as monuments of a wisdom almost more than human, and under which certain Divine truths were couched, not apparent to the apprehension of the vulgar. However, I am only adverting to a fact, when I say that, whether reasonable or not, the principle itself was a recognized principle, to which individuals might not assent, but to which the Jews, as a body, were not at liberty to object.

It may seem strange, at first sight, that a mode of reasoning apparently so uncertain, on any supposition, and so totally inadmissible under circumstances of ordinary discussion should yet, in the case of the Old Testament, have obtained, as we have seen, an almost unanimous consent. But we are not to judge the Old Testament, on the principles of philosophical criticism, as we should a work by Plato, or Cicero. The several books that form the venerable compilation, are not given as a treatise upon religion or morality, but the depository of a communication from God to man; to be the means by which, in the process of ages, mankind were to be brought to the knowledge and belief of things, deeply concerning their happiness, and such as they could never learn except by revelation. This is not the same sort of end which is proposed in other books; and, therefore, this book

For Scripture is *not* to be treated as other books;

is not to be subjected to the same rules of comparison, but must be dealt with on an hypothesis of its own.

and a concealed sense was a necessity

The very end for which the Law was given, the prophecies delivered, and both written, made it necessary, not only that much of the true import should be concealed, but that the Jews should be *aware* that it was so ; and so come to regard their Scriptures not as men regard other books, but as a sort of mine, in which their learned men were to dive beneath the letter, however interesting, for the treasures of hidden wisdom which they contained. It is easy, then, to see how comparatively useless the Old Testament would have been to the Apostles, when reasoning in the synagogue, concerning the immaterial nature of Christ's kingdom, if the latter had never before heard of any except the strict literal interpretation. St. Paul's arguments, in such a case, would not have obtained from the synagogue a moment's attention. On the other hand, the many advantages which were derived from the prevalent habits of thinking among the Jews, as just now explained, and from the belief that all the parts of their temple service, and much of their history, and large portions of the writings of the Prophets, were, as Philo expresses it, the *σύμβολα τῶν νοητῶν*, rather than the very literal matter on the face of the word, narrowed the controversy between the Apostles and their adversaries, and brought it at once to an intelligible issue. The supposition of a hidden meaning being once admissible, the question whether the truths announced by the Apostles were the very truths which God, according to the tradition, had shown to Moses on the mount, was evidently one which only God could decide. It was not a matter of opinion, but turned upon the determination of a fact, the proof of

which rested with the Apostles. They were not to allege God's decision, in a general way, but to demonstrate it, by some overt act of the Divine interposition.

All this, as has been urged, presupposed in the Jewish mind the existence of certain antecedent conclusions; and among the rest it presupposed an acknowledgment by the Jews, that their Scriptures were not to be simply interpreted as were other books, and that the true or ultimate sense of them was a secret. We have before shown how important it was that this method should, with them, at the same time, be carefully limited; so that the full meaning of their law might be kept back from their minds, until the time had arrived when the great events on which the evidence of its revelation would depend, should be brought to pass. But how were these dissimilar and jarring ends to be obtained? We see what it was which the case required. It was some contrivance, by which the true sense of the prophecies (that "sealed document," to which I have more than once compared them) was to be veiled from the sight of the Jews; but which, at the same time, involved another process, by means of which its general import, and various circumstantial particulars relating to it, should be disclosed.

We have already examined the first of these processes when explaining the reasons on which the use of *types* was founded. And if we desire to understand the process by which a knowledge of the typical character of so much of the Old Testament was made so evident to the Jews; and the causes of their belief, as yet implicit only, in the reality of the truths which it concealed, we have only to remember the sovereign estimation in which the Jews held their Scripture, and yet reflect upon the nature of its contents. A

in order to  
future re-  
velation.

For men  
could not  
have  
rested in  
the letter,

moment's thought will show that the doctrine of a concealed sense was an inevitable conclusion; it was scarcely possible for them to have regarded it as the inspired Word of God, without, at the same time, attributing to its contents a meaning, a reach beyond what was conveyed by the literal interpretation.

from its  
want of  
evident  
reason,

It is said in Ezekiel, that God had given the Jews "statutes which were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;" that is,—as the Jews define the words "statutes" and "judgments,"—had given them precepts, for some of which no reason whatever was assigned, and others, of which the reasons were given, but which possess no moral excellence. It has been said, that the number of such precepts, which are found in the Old Testament, having been the cause of many Jews, in the twelfth century, falling away, some to Christianity, and others to Mahommedism, occasioned Maimonides to write his "*More Nevochim*;" in which he endeavours to find the reasons on which every precept of the Law was severally grounded. But if I am not mistaken, we may find a more satisfactory solution of those precepts than any which he produces, in the very absence of those reasons which Maimonides endeavours to find; for the impossibility of explaining many parts of the Old Testament was among the very means by which the knowledge and belief of its typical character obtained, and by which it has always been kept alive in the minds of his countrymen.

and this  
could not  
*here* be  
really the  
case.

Secular compositions may lack serious meaning, as human actions or human laws may be without reason, or at least any adequate reason. But such a way of judging is not allowable in a case where we suppose a Divine author. Whatever act or sentiment we attri-

bute to the Lord must be supposed to have had, not only some reason, but some sufficient reason. And this every one does suppose when he is considering the works of God's visible creation. We may not see at once the use of poisonous reptiles, of earthquakes, of so much sin and misery as fills the world; nevertheless we believe that a sufficient reason exists for the permission, at least, of all these things, though it be concealed from our understanding. Just so it was that the Jews reasoned.

To whatever part of the Old Testament we turn our attention, we are continually met by passages, in which we are compelled to suppose a meaning or a motive beyond what the text, when literally explained, will supply. In the *historical* parts, for example, how many transactions are there, such as the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Confusion of tongues, the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, which it is equally difficult to receive, or to refer to God's commands, without assuming reasons of some sort, whereof no hint is given to us in the document itself. If we turn to the Levitical *law*, the same conclusion is still more strongly forced upon our minds; and even in the *prophecies*, we at once perceive, that the world, at least, in which we live remaining what it is, the literal fulfilment of those passages which refer to the Messiah's kingdom would be impossible. Under these circumstances, then, the doctrine of *types*, that is, of a spiritual or symbolical interpretation, necessarily became, and always has continued to be, a part of the Jewish theology; and it arose, in great measure, out of the peculiar kind of obscurities with which their Scriptures abound.

Hence  
the need  
of search-  
ing for a  
meaning  
beyond.

As the need for such elucidation lay in our way, I

Argument  
resumed.



trust that the importance of the subject will be considered as a sufficient excuse for the present interruption to the general argument. This we shall now resume. The point, then, at which we diverged for the moment (p. 282) was,—the antecedent proofs by which the belief of the leading *doctrines* of the Gospel was originally supported. But these proofs do not appear to involve directly either the abolition of the *Mosaic* Institution ; or to afford any direct evidence to show that the future kingdom which the Prophets had described in such sublime language, was the present Church ;—a society, which, instead of exhibiting at *that* juncture any visible signs of that spiritual power and dominion which it soon afterwards obtained, was, in the time of the Apostles, maintaining a painful struggle for existence. It now remains to consider the argumentative evidence, and not the means alone, by which the unequal struggle was sustained, and finally conducted to a successful issue, in the definitive establishment of the authority of Christ over the minds and consciences of mankind at large.

#### NOTE A.

Philo, like Josephus, a noble of Aaronic descent, before the discharge of his perilous embassy, held the high and onerous office of Alabarch, chief and responsible magistrate of the enormous Jewish colony at Alexandria. He was also father of Alexander Tiberius, an entirely Romanized Jew, high in office and favour with the Roman court, and with the Herods. Philo himself had passed the best of his days in study, and in profound religious retirement, having much to impart but little to receive from Hellenism beyond the instrument of an exquisite mundane language, and the modern science of dialectical exposition, unknown to the depositories of Eastern "wisdom." Philo was one of a type naturally inconceivable by slighter but important favourites of our public—Daniel, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Ezra, Ambrose, Anselm, Ximenes, and others, promoted, as men say, to great honours, at a time when any zest was extinct which might compensate the odium, and precarious advantage

and miseries of such elevation. The writings of this eminent and charitable man are of earlier date, I presume, than the duties in which he closed his public life.

It seems not a little remarkable to find, if my authorities may be trusted, in the mysterious Zohar, first circulated among the European or Western Jews in the 13th century, a singular statement which would show that the rotation and circulation of this globe might have been known as *arcana* even to Moses and the Psalmist, while these still expressed themselves *phenomenally* only, as, indeed, do our present Savants, in ordinary discourse. The Chev. Drach goes so far as to suggest that Copernicus might himself have been put in the way by some cabalist at home or abroad.

“Et dans le livre de Rab Hammuna l’Ancien, il est longuement expliqué que toute la terre roule sur elle-même *dans un cercle*, par le mouvement d’un corps sphérique. Les uns (de ses habitants) se trouvent en bas, les autres en haut, et tous ces hommes ont des vues différentes, à cause des faces diverses du ciel, selon la position de chaque point. Et ils marchent debout comme les autres hommes. C’est pourquoi quand le point des uns est éclairé, le point opposé est dans l’obscurité. Ceux-ci ont le jour, et ceux-là ont la nuit. Et il y a un point (le pôle) qui est tout jour, où la nuit ne dure qu’un temps très court. Et ce qui est dit dans les livres des anciens, et dans le livre d’Adam le premier homme, est conforme à ceci. Et ce mystère a été confié aux maîtres de la Sagesse, et pas aux géographes, parce que c’est un mystère profond de la loi.” On which last phrase comments Imrè-Bina; “ce mystère a été confié aux maîtres de la Cabale, et pas aux maîtres des sciences naturelles, car ceux-ci enseignent que la terre est une Etendue limitée (*a round flat*), ainsi que nous l’apprend le livre *Pardès* de Moïse Corduero.”

Citations from this profound depository, of passages on the first verses in Genesis, and on the vicarious function of Messiah, are also interesting. Much, indeed, was probably surmised, or made known by discrete communication, from the beginning by those who, “living under the Law, belonged to the Gospel,” of which nothing was properly revealed, or *publici juris*, still less made obligatory until the epoch of the great light.--Ed.

#### NOTE B.

##### ANAGOGIC OR MYSTICAL INTERPRETATION.

As a principal scope of these discussions has been to explain certain events by taking account of matters existing at least as *facts*, however otherwise they may be appreciated, it might not be out of place to notice those more slight and apparently arbitrary allusions made occasionally to passages in the Old Testament in countenance of the Messianic claim of Jesus, which might seem to escape from the Evangelist in the midst of more serious and

judicial testimonies. So far as this may have been the case, the reason is, in a great measure, to be sought in the indulgence in a so-called mystical or anagogic method, well known in the schools until theology proper yielded the path to literal criticism, which, from too much neglect, has become well-nigh supreme with natures even not intended for such limit. The reader needs only to be reminded of the four methods recognized in the ancient exegesis. The direct, or literal, the moral, allegorical, the anagogic or properly mystical way, then in use.

1. The *direct*, or literal, though not necessarily the absolutely grammatical, but that which the writer had immediately in his mind; this was that meant to be taken in by the average hearer, subject, however, always to the existing oral tradition or teaching which governed every dubious passage. This method obtained generally in the two standard Targums, or authorized expositions.

2. The *moral*; or, as the name implies, the ethical or religious instruction to be drawn from some historical event or personal incident, and this formed perhaps the motive for the original record of the case.

3. *Allegorical* or parabolic; where, from a certain strangeness in the manner or in the matter narrated, somewhat other or beyond, was naturally surmised, by the intelligent, to have been at the bottom of the mind; for here the more obvious or popular matter serves only as suggestive of higher facts in the same order, however, and always *analogous*, though on superior plane or grade. So St. Paul treats, with the Synagogue, also the story of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory, on the principle that such things were really put on paper for the eventual instruction of that generation in which the extremities of the two ages should meet, *i.e.* for the days of the Messiah. This method often seems to touch the properly mystical, from which, however, it is *in se* distinct. Thus allegorical almost entirely is the profound book of the Canticles. Also the greater part of the Proverbs are written only for the intelligent, a fact which breaks out in the eighth chapter.

4. The *anagogic* or *mystical*. Those above may all be classed under the name of exegesis, properly so called, for they profess no more than to render the literal or, at most, the ultimate meaning of the writer himself; whereas this last, or the mystical method, ought not to be termed interpretation at all; for it is but a mode of application by the commentator or preacher—independent of the matter before him—arbitrary or, maybe, capricious as regards the text or context, which is used only as an ostensible countenance for other ideas that might possess his mind at the moment. A peculiarity of this, as implied in the term *anagoge*—otherwise adaptive, accommodative, adventitious—was that a more ‘level’ or ordinary incident

or precept was momentarily *drawn up* to a higher use or significance. Nay, the lower, the more available it seemed for such method; for thus, things so confessedly inferior, ran less risk of being confounded with things higher, *miscendo sacra profanis*.

Such treatment may be seen in Philo's comments on the lives of Jonah and Samson. The so-called Areopagite has also remarks to the same effect. It carried, however, no authority in the school. Hence the Rabbinical maxim, "One does not reply to a Haggadah." It was no argument.

The obvious dangers of such liberty were, however, always restrained within the limits of orthodoxy by the maxim obtaining in the Synagogue, and afterwards in the Catholic school, that nothing was to be introduced as doctrine, whatever play might otherwise be given to fancy, which could not be based on some other *literal* text; and nothing proposed at all which was *contrary* to either oral faith or to other plainer statements in Scripture; nor needed the momentary import attached to such text to have been in any sense that of the original writer, on the condition of its being really reducible under some other acknowledged place of Holy Writ. In such case doctrine was *in tuto*, and the hearer was quite secured from harm; he would, in any case, carry away nothing but an edifying thought or truth, if not that very truth properly couched in the passage. So ruled an ancient Rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, that those who *did* prophecy, or *thus abound in their own sense*, should take heed not to go beyond the limits or needful proportion of the then recognized rule of faith, which some have taken to mean the Apostolic Creed; or whatever limit might obtain in that provisional time, before the emancipation from the legal Egypt by the ruin of Jerusalem, and while, according to the apostolic maxim, the "Synagogue" was being "buried with honour."

In the case of the ancient Synagogue the maxim is well known that all the Prophets had in view—their objective point as it were—was the Messiah and His times. This was the ultimate reason of their very exceptional functions, as it was that of the vocation of Abraham, the commission of Moses, the illuminations bestowed on the Prophets. Hence, though these profound writings presented to the ordinary preacher their obscurities and their seemingly grotesque or uncouth incidents, the teacher yet felt that he could do at least no mischief in using them in favour of some acknowledged moral or religious duty, especially in giving to any morsel of them that Messianic reference or colour which was the motive of the whole Mosaic and prophetic economy, since "all the prophecies terminated upon John," that is upon the dawn of the Messianic advent.

It is not here urged that these expedients were, as with more universal duties of instruction, always desirable or always in season, but the use is a *fact* to be recognized in the right estima-



tion of the genius and practice of remoter times; they were allowed, too, by good and prudent men of those days, such as form wholesome opinion everywhere, and doubtless for reasons deemed sufficient. If one motive among others might be suggested for such resort, it would be the humble one that in the absence, in more ancient days, as at present in all the East, of any cultivation of what is now styled the historical interest, or divining tact, or critical method, or of much secular or antiquarian curiosity, and so of any views generalized from large survey—or quite conceivably acquired at second hand alone—of the practical and social varieties and ethical situations of more modern life, it would not always be so easy for the simple expositor to give due variety and development to the text which inevitable occasion might have brought before him. He, therefore, would think himself safe in treating some one great and authorized topic with which his own thoughts might have been occupied, and for which he found himself in the vein, and so enliven withal languid attention without any great scruple as to the exigencies of grammatical exegesis. Some text, indeed, was always to be alleged for any position, that was, so to speak, the obligatory theological etiquette; but this was little more than intimation to the audience that the speaker is always on the same plane or level with themselves; a grave salutation, so to speak, to the sacred canon, in recognition of its supreme place or permanent authority.

Notwithstanding all this, however, for the inculcation of any serious point upon the credence of the hearer, or in confutation of the disputant, the sense, when plain, of Holy Writ, or, failing that, the acknowledged belief of the community, has always been held, both in the schools of the ancient and modern law, the first or paramount allegation or common topic.

A fair instance of what properly was understood by the *literal* or duly recognized sense, is given by M. Deutz. "Whoever," says the Talmud, "translates," as Meturgeman in the synagogue, "any verse in its closely grammatical form, without regard to its real" or orally notorious "meaning, is a liar; but whoever adds to it is an impious man and a blasphemer." Thus, with the Talmud, the literal rendering into Chaldee of the verse (Exod. xxiv. 10), as "*They saw the God of Israel*," is as wrong a translation as, "They saw the *Angel* of God," the proper rendering being "They saw the *glory* of the God of Israel." For this last was what was really in the mind of Moses, and, as such, known orally by his school or disciples; and this was the only meaning producible in discussions of the school, to the exclusion of mere Midrash or Apologue. "One is not bound to reply to a Hagadah," it was said. To the same effect spoke Jeremy Taylor, at the end of his life, before the University of Dublin.

"But, then, remember this also; that not the grammatical



or prime signification alone of the word is the literal sense; but whatever is the prime intention of the speaker, *that* is the literal sense, and that though the word be to be taken metaphorically, or by translation signify more things than one." See also Taylor's "Via Intelligentiæ," of about the same date.

Such allegorizing, or accommodative method, was well explained by Rabbi Cohen, A.D. 1375 (as given in M. Neubauer's collection, *vide supra*). After maintaining at some length in public dispute the proper reference of the great Parsaschah, beginning "My servant shall be exalted," to the sufferings of the race alone, and the retribution of the Gentiles, exclusive of any Person, the Rabbi turns with air somewhat disdainful, and, as it were, *ex abundanti*, to the explicit and inevitable gloss alleged by the respondent, and current in all Hebrew schools, to the effect that "My servant" is Messiah, and His "exaltation" is to be above "Abraham," even above "Moses;" nay, even above the "ministering angels." Choosing, however, to treat this as a mere Hagadah, or, as he renders the word, *roman*, "I am not bound," says he, "to honour it with a serious reply. For 'who replies to a Hagadah?' says the school." Now this ancient gloss was really—and, probably in the Rabbi's own conscience also—much more than such; but I produce his words in this instance only in illustration of the place which the anagogic method held in general by the side of a more direct or explicit exposition. "I needed, however," resumes the Rabbi, "to have met you, as I have just done, on the literal meaning only, for it is the Talmud alone that contains what every Jew has to believe, such as are the Halakah, or the ordinances relating to marriage, or divorce, or Levirate, or clean or unclean, for these were all laid down by the Rabbis, 'at whose mouth we live,' so that the Halakah, or detail of obligatory law, has been settled by the best masters after frequent discussion.

"Now, the Hagadah, parabolic, or adaptitious method, it is well known, is not used in the same manner, for each of these expresses the opinion of some one doctor only, who would at times indulge his pupils with a Hagadah, to interest them, at others would arouse the listless with some strange and sudden story;" and he quotes a monstrous instance of the same sort in the case of no less a personage than Jehudah the Holy, compiler of the Mishnah. (Of the same kind was probably the verbal parable, or possible popular form, in which a Presbyter, most distinguished in his day, Papias, had cast or received the current millennial lore.)

"But, on other occasions also, the teacher, desiring to communicate some more *profound* doctrine, or philosophical *truth*, without making it too clear to the people at large, would adopt the form of a parable, proverb, or dark saying, in order that the 'wise' might alone perceive the import, while the multitude,

regarding it as so much "romance," would only be entertained. And this, in fact, *was* the design of King Solomon, in the composition of the Song of Songs. It is thus, too, that we have learned of our Rabbis to deem of passages that obviously cannot be taken in the letter, as in the Holy Scriptures, of 'cities high and built up to heaven;' and that we read in the Talmud, of the 'veil of the Temple;' or the 'golden vine placed by Herod in the sanctuary;' or 'the apple tree that grew in the midst of the altar,' and other obvious monstrosities.

"Since, however, you have chosen to bring forward this Midrash, I will show you," and he does so with some subtlety, "how, not Messiah alone, but every just man may be said to be 'higher than the angels,' so that it is of no use for *your* purpose."

In point of fact, however, this particular Hagadah was much more than what were latterly so classed. It seems to have been a gloss of universal adoption, and occurs in the "*Pugio Fidei*," where it is assigned to ancient traditional sources. So that, in fact, the Rabbi could hardly avoid dealing with it at this juncture. It is, however, to be borne in mind that the Gospel itself is little interested in these curious or artificial expedients, which we here refer to only so far as they may exhibit, as does this Rabbi's language, the Hebrew exegesis and opinion as obtaining *before* the Christian era, in order to explain the *theory* of expedients, recognized as quite permissible in the school, by the best minds of the period. On such occasions a Hillel or Gamaliel would, without scruple, adduce a text, not only to confirm some orthodox or orally received dogma, but for no more than to serve as *appui* for a position depending for *proof* on a different passage; that is, anagogically only, or even as a mask or countenance for a mere opinion of the speaker, regarded for what it might be worth.

It is not so unlikely that such resort may not have been foreign to early synagogical reasonings of charitable Evangelists, whose object was not triumph, or even conviction in the abstract, but to bring the blind by any reputable means, and in this case only such could be successful, into relation with the Father through Jesus Christ.

This important gloss, current long before the Talmud with the Rabbins, is to the effect that the "exaltation" of "my servant" (Is. lii.) will be far above the "angels," or Moses or Abraham. It must have been to the development of this maxim, as already seated in their minds, that St. Paul devoted his great encyclical for the Hebrews, in which he identifies Christ, in the person of the mysterious Melchisedek, with the Logos Himself.

It is, perhaps, not undeserving of notice, that the "bread and wine" is taken by the ancient Rabbis for the "*Mincha*;" also the allusion to Melchisedek in *this* reference, in the ancient liturgies. In all this is no question of any "Alexandrian" source.—ED.

## CHAPTER II.

### CESSATION OF THE JEWISH COVENANT.

Jewish view of God's promise—Interpretation of the Apostles—The Proof in abeyance before the destruction of Jerusalem—State of the Argument in the time of St. Paul—Solution provided—Destruction of the Temple—Effect on the argument—Rise of the Christian dispensation connected with the fall of the Jewish—Not understood before the event—Temporary nature of the Jewish covenant known to the ancient Jews—Evident from consideration of the covenant itself—The subject of prophecy—State of the controversy before the death of Christ and destruction of Jerusalem—How to be decided—Destruction of Jerusalem.

VIEWING, then, the Old Testament in the light which was taken of its meaning by the Jews, the proper subject of the prophecies, regarded as a scheme or organized plan, was not so much, as we have already intimated, the *person* Himself of the Messiah, but the glories of the kingdom which He was to establish. It was for the sake of what was meant or involved in the kingdom, or final regime, especially, as described in Daniel, that the presence of the Prince himself was so eagerly desired. Nothing can be more extravagant than the notions which the people at large had been taught to entertain respecting the miraculous character of their future condition under that new dispensation to which they looked forward, if we may judge from what we read in the Talmud;<sup>1</sup> but passing over what may be

Main topic  
not the  
Messiah  
but the  
Kingdom,

<sup>1</sup> It was but, as above said, a brief and mystical Hagadah as to the glories of the kingdom, come down to Papias from Jesus,

deemed the vulgar belief, and taking the views only of those among them who may be supposed to have been least inclined to embrace the Rabbinical dreams, still the interpretation put upon the prophecies by the Apostles must have been regarded by persons accustomed to the doctrines of the Synagogue as offering a tame, as well as arbitrary explanation of God's Promise.

flattered  
national  
arrogance,

Many of the Jews, no doubt, especially of those dispersed among the heathen in every part of the world, may be supposed to have been not unwilling to adopt apparently less irrational interpretation than was taught by the Rabbinical expositors; but after every possible allowance, still the lowest explanation equally with the highest was carefully framed to flatter the national arrogance.

till calling  
of Gentiles  
was re-  
vealed ;

Until the revelation made to St. Peter seven years after the death of Christ, bidding him receive Cornelius to baptism, it is evident that even among the Apostles themselves the admission of the Gentiles to share in the blessings of the kingdom was a matter imperfectly, if at all, understood. To Israel only pertained the adoption, and the covenants, and the glory, and all the privileges attached to the Divine favour. These privileges they looked upon as a right and property, to which they alone had a title who could claim a descent from Abraham. The nations of the world they regarded as strangers to promise, profane, dwelling not under the wings of the Shekinah, but under the shadow of death.

who did no more than recall, in parabolic and portable phrase, Isaiah, which has earned scorn from the *bel esprits* for that good man, as one not to be credited even for what he had himself seen or heard. The simple will remember that so great a mind as Trajan, when confronted with Ignatius, called him a *κακοδαίμων*, a "poor wretch." Fine wits are not at their best with the divine and the homely which characterize the early Christian.—Ed.

Now, however high the privileges of the Gospel may be, when viewed in more spiritual light, yet the last, it is plain, was not the kind of hope to which the Jews had been instructed to look forward, as constituting that "new heaven and new earth" which were to be revealed. It would not be enough to say that the evangelical interpretation of the words did not realize the popular expectation; it contravened that belief in a manner the most pointed, and, according to the Jewish apprehension, even the most humiliating. Considering, then, the question as between the Apostles and their hearers, at the point of time when the proclamation of the Gospel was confined to Jerusalem and Judæa, there is therefore nothing that need cause us to feel surprise at its non-reception by the hierarchy or numerical majority of the nation. It may be true that in comparison with the notions which zealots had formed of the meaning of the Promise, the Christian interpretation, high and mysterious as it may have been, was sober and probable; but such was not, and was not likely to be, the current opinion; nor indeed, if we look closely to the position of things, at this stage of the question, am I prepared to say that the evidence *was* such as to *compel* their assent. There was still left ground for doubt and conjecture, even in the view of many who may be supposed not altogether to have rejected the good news.

If, then, the principle of interpretation on which the Apostles explained the meaning of the prophecies was admitted, one thing was clear, namely, that the great Promise made to mankind had not been fulfilled, and would not be fulfilled, according to that sense on which the *national* expectation of the Jews had been built. But neither had it at that time been fulfilled, accord-

which  
was a  
great  
shock to  
the many.

For as yet  
nothing  
had been  
fulfilled  
in this  
sense,



ing, even, to the more serious sense for which the Christians contended. The nations of the earth, to all outward appearance, still walked in the valley of the shadow of death; their idols of silver and gold were still seen on the hills and on every high place. Kings and princes had not become the nursing fathers of Christ's Church, neither had the nations flowed into it. The knowledge of the Lord, instead of covering the earth as the waters cover the sea, was still confined to one people—upon them only had the light *shined*. If, then, the times of the Messiah had come, where were the signs of His appearing?

though one  
quite as  
credible  
in *itself*.

It was true, we know, that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that many wonderful works had shown themselves forth in His name; and if, withal, it had been the design of God to exalt *this* name, above every name, and to make it one at which every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth:—the hypothesis that in Jesus the true Messiah had come was then intelligible, and would account withal for all the wonderful facts related by the Apostles and others. But at that *early* time this last was no *more* than an *hypothesis*, a point to be made good. When the design of God, in sending His Son under such conditions as were explained by the Apostles, should have been afterwards recognizable in its visible accomplishment, then it would be plain that the construction put by them upon God's dealings in this juncture would be the true and *intended* construction. But this great result remained as yet in suspense; and in the meanwhile the mind even of the firmest adherent might have been, and must indeed have been more or less, tossed upon a sea of doubt; for as yet there was a wide room left open for conjecture and opinion.

So long as the Jewish hierarchy was standing, with all its powerful ramifications, and polytheism continued to be the predominant religion of mankind, all things else remaining, to all outward appearance, the same as before the coming of Christ,—who Jesus was, and what the object of His coming, must of necessity have been an open question, even with all the light of the Old Testament as a guide. However strong the arguments may have been for the belief which the Apostles and their immediate followers entertained, yet in strictness of reasoning, the door was not shut upon a contrary belief. Jesus might be the Messiah whom the Scriptures had foretold; but it was not His mere coming into the world which was sufficient to fulfil the prophecies, either in the Jewish sense or in any other. This was, indeed, the indispensable condition of that fulfilment, and an essential part of the dispensation which it was His object to complete; nevertheless, until the religion which He came to make known was established, or, at least, until its eventual predominance had become so probable as to be looked forward to with absolute confidence by mankind, the proof of the *Divine* authority of Jesus was still in abeyance, and could not be demonstrated: or to speak from the Jewish point of view, whether Jesus of Nazareth was that prophet who should come into the world, or whether mankind were yet to seek another, was a point which still remained to be conclusively determined. In the affairs of life, people every day are seen to act on a confidence that particular events will come to pass for which they have no absolute evidence, and so it was, no doubt, with numbers who at this period embraced the Gospel; all that I have said is, that at the time which we are now considering,

Question  
was open  
while  
temple  
stood.

The new covenant in no sense as yet matter of fact.

they had not the *same conclusive* evidence for their belief, as regards *this* part of the question, which was soon afterwards amply vouchsafed.

If we look to St. Paul's Epistles, we see that, at the time when he was writing, a large number of persons, both in Judæa and elsewhere, by comparing the events related in the New Testament, with a variety of prophecies contained in the Old, had been persuaded to think that the long-expected time was about to happen when the provisional covenant was to be done away, and a new and more perfect covenant, agreeably to God's promise, to be substituted in its place. At that time the legitimacy of this persuasion was not an established fact, but a matter of faith, and earned confidence with some ; of doubt, and conjecture, and controversy, and disbelief with others. The partisans of these shades of opinion would hold their respective views, some with more and some with less confidence, but none with that sort of confidence which is derived from actual knowledge. So long as the Jewish polity and those immemorial institutions continued to subsist, and were still ostensibly countenanced by Jesus, the question was necessarily surrounded with difficulty. For if the institution of the New Covenant were to be taken to be from God, its prospective establishment among mankind, and that *conjointly* with the continuance of the Mosaic covenant, must have seemed to involve a contradiction. On such a supposition it was clear that the *Divine* authority, at least, of the Law had been withdrawn, and was at an end. But by what peremptory argument was it possible for this to be evinced, so long as the Temple of Jerusalem was standing, and could number among its worshippers, not only a majority of the inhabitants of Judæa, but

thousands, and hundreds of thousands, "out of every nation under heaven"? In these straits, then, the inquirer found himself.

If we examine the Acts of the Apostles, or the Epistles of St. Paul, more particularly, we cannot fail to observe how large a place this question of the abrogation of the Law occupied in the estimation of all parties at the time to which I am now adverting. The obligation of the Mosaic law was the first controversy publicly debated in the Church. That question, and the calling or initiation of the Gentiles (which, in fact, are only different parts of the same question) constitute almost the entire subject of three most elaborate Epistles of St. Paul, and are emphatically alluded to in all the others; this was a matter of discussion, and even of excited debate, not only among the brethren in general, but even among the Apostles themselves. Some appear to have supposed that the law was still binding upon the consciences of all those who had received circumcision; others, that it was only expedient; others, that it was indifferent. St. Paul maintained, and at length united the suffrages of all the Apostles in his opinion, that the practice was unlawful. For it was a keeping up, he said, of that partition-wall which it was the very object of the Gospel to break down; and threw a doubt upon the revelation of what had hitherto been the great mystery, or, more plainly, the recall of the intellectual Creature, namely, the calling of the Gentiles—though this was the real reason of Mosaism—which had yet been secreted, as he says, from the foundation of the world. Practically it was tantamount to a denial of the fulfilment in Jesus Christ of the Promise made to mankind at the beginning,—an evident countenancing

Hence, in  
the main  
point of  
dispute,

of the Jews in their rejection of Him as the Saviour of the whole race.

Paul's  
reasons  
not as yet  
demon-  
strated.

These, however, and similar arguments, were at that time highly authorized opinions, but were not capable of actual proof. If, as St. Paul asserted, the Jewish law was already cancelled or superseded, in heaven, this was a fact of which there was as yet no such visible sign as had accompanied its original promulgation on Sinai; and it was a fact which, from the nature of things, could not be demonstrated on merely speculative grounds of reasoning. The belief of St. Paul himself was not shared by many who were yet professed adherents to the cause; it was not, therefore, to be supposed that it would be adopted by opponents; but, on any supposition, the declaration of the Jewish law being done away, was a doctrine which it devolved upon the Apostles to prove, and not upon their opponents to refute.

The  
capital  
point be-  
tween  
Law and  
Gospel  
not yet  
set at  
rest for  
good,

For it should be borne in mind that it was only among their immediate followers that the Apostles were listened to as illuminated teachers; the majority of the nation entertained an opposite opinion. Even those who did not deny the reality of the facts which have been related by the Evangelist, did not therefore admit the conclusions which the Apostles deduced, as regarded the even Divine authority of Christ; still less were they disposed to acquiesce in the corollaries which they drew. Even supposing Christ to have been the promised Messiah, other questions still remained behind as to the true nature of what He was commissioned to effect. The calling of the Gentiles into the church; the abrogation of the laws of Moses; the institution of another covenant involving an entirely new commandment and an entirely new interpretation of the Old Testament—these were propositions not neces-



sarily involved in the admission even of Christ's resurrection and of the other miracles ascribed to Him by his followers. But we have only to examine the Epistles of St. Paul, and we shall see that these momentous topics were the questions which engaged almost the whole thoughts of the Apostle, and the thoughts of those to whom most of his Epistles were addressed. The same topics are alluded to in many of our Lord's discourses, but it was darkly, and in parables, which were not seized or understood at the time even by His immediate followers. For they were truths which could not be *demonstrably* inferred from the language of the Old Testament; and still less were they deducible by any general reasoning, except in the way of a probable opinion. The question in debate was not a speculative truth, but a matter of fact, to be determined only by the event; and in what way this solution was to be arrived at, it was difficult to conjecture.

Difficult, however, as it might be, the solution had been provided and was then at hand. An event was in preparation which rendered the continuance of the Mosaic law an impossible obligation, and the cessation of its authority an incontrovertible fact. The abolition of the Jewish religion was divinely proclaimed by an evidence more unambiguous and in a voice louder than any revelation could be made by words. The event I am here alluding to was the destruction of Jerusalem.

To understand the important bearing of this event upon the point before us, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Temple of Jerusalem among the Jews was not like the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, or of Diana at Ephesus, among the heathens: merely one of the many celebrated temples in which worshippers

though the  
solution  
was at  
hand.

Unique  
position  
of the  
Temple

assembled ; but it was the only temple belonging to the nation. Though the Jews at that time were dispersed in vast numbers throughout the world, and had synagogues, where they met for the purpose of religious worship, in almost every city, yet they were not permitted by their law to perform any of the rites of public worship ; that is, they were not allowed to offer any sacrifices, nor to build any altar, except at Jerusalem. There alone the priests could officiate, or the Levites perform the duties of their daily ministration. There only it was that the three great Feasts of the Passover, and of the Pentecost, and of the Tabernacles were to be solemnized ; and every male was commanded to attend annually at each of these three solemnities, however distant his abode might be, or however great the difficulties of the journey.

provided  
for aboli-  
tion of  
its own  
worship.

It plainly appears, therefore, that after the destruction of the city and Temple by Titus, the observance of that part of the law which regarded the ceremonial worship of the Jews—the only *cultus commanded*—became, and has ever continued to be, impossible. By forbidding any oblation or any offering for sin to be made, except in the place where the ark of the covenant was deposited, God as it were had *nailed* down the religion of the Jews to one spot ; and considering what the history of the nations of the world has been, its temporary institution had been almost as distinctly indicated. Supposing an intimation of this truth to have been intended by God, it is not easy to see in what way, short of an express declaration, His meaning could have been more plainly signified.

For this  
catastrophe  
coinciding

Keeping, then, in recollection this fundamental commandment of the law ; and, at the same time, bearing in our minds the history of Jesus, and all

that is related of Him—for it was out of this that the question about the *Divine* authority of the Gospel had arisen,—it is easy to conceive that the utter destruction of the city and its Temple, and the total desolation of their nation, happening at such a juncture, and at the very time when an opinion had begun to be proclaimed among the Jews that the end of the Mosaic dispensation was at hand, must have seemed, at least to many, more than a mere presumptive argument in confirmation of this belief. In the minds of those who ascribed the origin of the new dispensation to God, and at the same time regarded the dissolution of the Jewish polity to have been *also* the effect of an immediate Divine interposition, the fulfilment, that is, of a foreknown decree, which had gone forth at the very time when this polity was established,—the conclusion would be demonstrative. People may reason against reason, as they may hope against hope ; but except on a supposition of the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic law, the belief of its Divine abolition became an inference not to be resisted.

So far, then, as concerns that part of the question which related simply to a continuance of the obligation to observe the Mosaic law, it would plainly seem that the position of this argument, as it stood in the time when St. Paul was writing, became entirely *changed* after the overthrow of their nation. The condition of St. Paul's reasoning was not merely altered for the better ; but that which in his days and in the days of the Apostles had been only an hypothesis, depending upon the interpretation of an unfulfilled prophecy, had become a matter of fact. That is to say, if there had been nothing more to be stated than the incontrovertible truth, that the rise of Christ's religion

with the  
new law,  
confirmed  
the latter.

So that  
the case  
as against  
the law  
was  
decisive.

and  
strongly  
pre-  
sumptive  
for the  
gospel ;

in the world was coincident both in time and place with the violent overthrow of the law, yet would this alone, in the minds of persons admitting the things related of Jesus by the Apostles to have really *happened*, have afforded weighty logical presumption that the Gospel was the work of God, for they would suppose the two events to have been joined together in the more secret scheme of God's own providence.

but would  
be proof  
positive for  
those who  
had *ex-  
pected*  
before-  
hand the  
event.

But, however highly probable the conclusion might have seemed, yet it would become to such persons something more than merely *probable*, if, as can be shown to have been the case, the rise of the Messianic and the fall of the Mosiac dispensation were events associated with each other in the antecedent *persuasion* of mankind ; also, that they had both been spoken of beforehand, as parts of one and the same event, in certain well-known *predictions* ; and had, moreover, been apprehended in the same *sense*, in the distinct expectation of thousands and tens of thousands, and that at a time when the solid polity of the Jews was yet standing, and before the name of Christianity had been heard.

In the restricted view which I have been taking, all along, of the evidences, my proper business is simply to state the *facts* from which the belief of mankind in the Divine authority of the Christian religion would appear to have taken its rise, and this is a matter so far of historical disquisition, and not of opinion or inference. Whether mankind have reasoned rightly or wrongly from the same depends upon other considerations. There is now no doubt what their creed *is*, but only about the *reasons* on which, good or bad, it was originally founded. If, as I have before observed, those motives were such as to have justified in *reason* the belief of mankind in the Divine authority of the

Gospel at the time when it was first revealed, and would have done so under the same circumstances in any age of the world, the soundness of their conclusion would not be practically affected by merely speculative difficulties. The proof, whatever it was, if of Divine appointment, would, as I have before said, be adjusted to the common principles of reasoning without any view to metaphysical arguments. Such certainly was the nature of the evidence on which the belief of mankind in the abolition of the Jewish dispensation was finally established.

In their apprehension the rise of the Christian religion in the world, and the fall of the Jewish, were not merely cotemporaneous events. It was not that one event merely presupposed the other, or might be inferred from a comparison of the two dispensations. The connection between them was the subject of positive revelation. They were expressly joined together, and formed a leading feature of the plan on which the prophecies were constructed. This, as was the case with some other parts of the Old Testament, was obscurely or not at all understood by the Jews, perhaps not clearly seen even by St. Paul himself at the time when his earliest Epistles were written ; but after the destruction of Jerusalem, the observance of the law having become impossible, its practical abolition was a matter of plain fact, superseding all merely general grounds of reasoning, and absorbing for ever all minor questions and circumstantial disputes.

That a knowledge of the near approach of this event was present to the mind of Jesus Himself, may be collected from several places of the New Testament ; no certain passage, however, of the New Testament can be pointed out, from which it can be

With the rise of the new order, the fall of the old had been connected in prophecy,

though the catastrophe was not, in fact, thought at hand,



shown that this particular fact was expected,<sup>1</sup> either by Jews or Christians, at the *time* when it was written. After the great catastrophe had come to pass, its connection with the prophetic scheme of the Old Testament became apparent; and the miraculous character of the event has ever since been admitted by all parties. Both Jews and Christians concurred in considering it as the fulfilment of prophecies well known to all, though not rightly understood beforehand. That it was in pursuance of a Divine purpose, and by God's immediate act, has never, I apprehend from the time when it happened to the present day, been made a question by any believer in the Old Testament: the only doubt or difference has been as to the meaning and design of God in that overwhelming event.

notwith-  
standing  
general  
hints in  
prophe-  
cies.

There are many places of the Old Testament in which allusion is made to the days when God would make a new revelation to mankind of a better and more spiritual law than that which had been vouchsafed to the Jews at Mount Sinai;<sup>2</sup> and the terms in which the promise is expressed involve a supposition of the future cessation of this last. This belief has been called in question by Maimonides; but he was, I think, the first Jew who did so; and his reasons have been opposed by some of his own nation, as contrary both to the letter of Scripture and to tradition. That it is contrary to many places of the

<sup>1</sup> I think the allusion to a great and imminent catastrophe, frequent, though veiled, in the writings of St. Paul, and, indeed, of Peter. The mass of the Jews did not acquiesce even in the destruction by Titus as definitive—as seen in subsequent revolts and in their ultimate frustration and dispersion under Hadrian.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

former may be shown, not only in particular passages, but from the general bearing of the prophecies relating to the kingdom of the Messiah. And that it is in opposition to the ancient tradition has been shown by extracts from the earlier writings of the Jewish Church.

But the fact requires no testimony, either from the ancient or modern opinion of the Jews. If we observe the partial uses of the Mosaic covenant, we at once see that the supposition of its Divine origin can only be satisfactorily explained on the hypothesis of its having been intended as an intermediate dispensation, or sort of parenthesis, introductory to some general design of God.<sup>1</sup> The silence which it maintained in the Pentateuch as to doctrine as such (for even that of the unity of God was not first revealed to mankind by Moses); its incompleteness even as a code of morals; its restriction to one spot, and to the descendants of one family, in no way distinguished from the rest of mankind by any claim to the Divine favour; and the exclusion of all other nations from its threats and promises and various obligations: these are not the features we should anticipate in a *final* revelation, and one by which “all the families of the earth were to be blessed.” But putting aside all speculative reasoning, the circumstance already adverted to, that the enactments of the Mosaic law were so constructed, as if on purpose that its observance should be impossible, except on a supposition of the uninterrupted residence of the Jewish nation in Judæa, and of the constant maintenance of the Temple at Jerusalem—all this would plainly seem quite contrary to the idea

Things were so planned that by one stroke the Law was made impossible

<sup>1</sup> A parenthesis suspends only, but does not break the continuity of what precedes with what follows.—Ed.

of a dispensation intended by God to be of perpetual obligation. Such a belief presupposes an opinion, not only that the city and Temple of the Jews were not destined to be violently destroyed by any merely human machination, but that, in all times, they were to be providentially preserved.

It is not necessary, however, to show the contrary of this supposition, either from external or internal proofs. The temporary and provisional character of the Jewish theocracy was so declared from the beginning, on an authority which they who were the subjects of it could not doubt.

as already  
declared  
in Deu-  
teronomy,

When the present state and past history of the Jews is borne in mind, it may be questioned whether there is, in the whole volume of the Old Testament, a more remarkable prophecy than is found in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, in which the future distress and desolation of the Jewish people is spoken of. It is not necessary to dwell upon the particular contents of this remarkable passage of Scripture, nor to verify its claims to Divine inspiration ; it is quite certain that its prophetic character was admitted by the Jews, and by all of every sect at Jerusalem, at the time I am now speaking of, when the first council assembled there to discuss the question of the Mosaic Law ; whether the burthen of it had been removed, or was still an incumbent obligation.

which con-  
templates  
the de-  
struction  
of both  
polity and  
temple,

As this prophecy contemplates a period when the Jewish people would be dispersed among all the nations of the world, and when their city and temple were to be destroyed, it would seem that the Jews themselves must have been well aware that the duty of observing the law was a contingent duty, and depending upon a forewarned condition :—Had they

or had they not forfeited the favour of God? The declaration of Divine displeasure against the nation, and of his determination to consider them no longer as his peculiar people, is the one subject of almost every parable which our Saviour delivered, as it was afterwards the leading topic of the preaching of St. Paul. I shall not stop to show this by extracts from the discourses of Christ, and from the Epistles of St. Paul. Every one who is familiar with the New Testament is aware that the calling of the Gentiles, and the renunciation of all claim to stand before God in virtue of the works merely of the ceremonial Law, are leading positions of them both. During the difficult period which intervened between the crucifixion of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, these were the prevailing controversies: no Jew who had been persuaded with the Apostles that the time had arrived when the Mosaic dispensation had now been withdrawn by God, would probably have hesitated to accept the interpretation put by them upon the prophetic pages of the Old Testament. But even admitting to the full the reality of all the miraculous facts related by the Evangelists, by what *direct* evidence, I again ask, was the truth of this particular conclusion to be *demonstrated*? The provisional purpose of the Mosaic dispensation, and the design of God to replace it by some future revelation, might be true, and might be acknowledged to be true, as a general proposition; and yet the period when its obligation upon the conscience was to cease might be altogether uncertain. By what proof, other than the Apostles' own declaration, were they when twenty, or thirty, or more years had passed since the death and disappearance of Jesus, to demonstrate

precisely that solemn epoch, the very generation when God's dealings with Israel, the nation chosen for His own purposes, were to be finally wound up and brought to a conclusion ?

but so  
long as  
these stood  
all was in  
suspense.

This was not a proposition to be shown to the mind of an Israelite by mere reason and from the nature of things ; and the utmost that could be inferred from the types and prophecies, even, was the general fact, that the Law was some day to have an end, or only, perhaps, an illustrious development in its own line. That sacrifices under the Law would then cease, and mankind be freed both from them and from all the other ordinances of Moses, was perhaps a necessary deduction. But with all this, on what evidence could it be further shown, except to those who already had, on other or inferior motives, embraced the Gospel, that the time foreordained was at hand, when God's covenant with the Jews was not to be enlarged only, but openly to be cancelled. The thing was possible ; it might even be a probable opinion ; as such, it had already been embraced by multitudes. But it had not been adopted by the whole even of Christ's immediate disciples ; and, after all, it was, in this stage, no dogma, but an opinion only. It did not, like the doctrine of the atonement, or of the Divinity of Christ after Pentecost, at least, rest at *this* time upon any evidence of facts. Even if the Apostles were right, yet as things then were, the actual knowledge of its truth was at that time confined to the mind of God, and those to whom God would have revealed it. For, as was before remarked, so long as Jerusalem was standing, and the people allowed to dwell in their own land ; so long as the service of the Temple was upheld in all its magnificence, and sacri-



fices were daily offered upon its altars ; and all things, to use the complaint of the Judaizers, as quoted by St. Peter, in reference to this very controversy, “ continued the same as they were from the beginning of the creation,” —the doctrine so long pressed by the Apostles on this point not only must have seemed to be, but really was, a somewhat bold deduction from the data. But the data were not in *demonstrative* form. The efficacy of the law of works might really have ceased within the Divine mind ; but so long as worship was paid to Him at Jerusalem, and the ceremonial enjoined by Moses punctually performed, the fact was incapable of human proof. It was yet among the secret things of God ; nor, unless it pleased Him to solve the question by some miraculous but incomprehensible demonstration of His will, is it easy to see in what way the great controversy was to be determined. For there was no human authority by which it could be decided ; nor any testimony, except one from above, from which there would not be an appeal.

In this state of things, at a time when the minds of so many may be supposed to have been distracted by contending opinions, and when doubt, and difficulties must have perplexed the understandings even of the wise, Heaven interfered ; and by a visible manifestation of His will, and one not to be mistaken, put an end to the controversy. Suddenly Jerusalem was encompassed with armies ; siege was laid to the city ; the Temple was levelled to the ground ; and the whole nation was scattered, as by a whirlwind, through every region of the earth. If all parties, on both sides of the question, had formally agreed to refer the controversy to the Divine arbitrement, and had consulted as to the proof by which they would

But Christ,  
by sword  
of Romans  
ended the  
contro-  
versy ;

mutually abide, it would have been difficult to have fixed upon a more conclusive testimony, or one more exactly applicable to the particular question in debate.

after which  
the great  
progress  
of Gospel  
was  
visible.

I need not stop to remind the reader of the place which the city and Temple of Jerusalem had been made to hold in the religious opinions of the Jews. History is silent as to the effect which we may suppose their destruction to have produced upon the popular belief during thirty years in relation to the evidences of the Gospel. It is plain, indeed, from Josephus, that good sense, and reason, and deliberation, had no share, at this time, either upon the opinions or the actions of the people of Jerusalem; and how the minds of the vast colonies in other parts of the world may have been affected by this sudden event, it may seem, in the absence of any authentic details, idle to conjecture. Judging, however, from the rapid progress which Christianity *must* have made in the world, after this catastrophe, compared with the comparative slowness of its propagation in the years immediately preceding, the effect would seem to have been commensurate with what the very circumstances of that overwhelming case might otherwise lead us to anticipate.

I return, however, to my present business which, in this discussion, is with known facts only, and with the reasoning immediately deducible from them.

## CHAPTER III.

### DANIEL IX.<sup>1</sup> CONSIDERED.

Abolition of the Jewish Law and the establishment of the Christian covenant, connected in the prophecies of the Old Testament—Times of the Messiah—Their limit negative—Supposed near approach of—Origin of this belief—Daniel—Antiquity of the Book of Daniel—Meaning of the term “week”—Passage quoted—Part of the prophecy plain—How the question stood before the destruction of Jerusalem—Destruction of Jerusalem proved the Jewish Law to be abolished, but not that Jesus was the Christ—Daniel’s prophecy—Its object—From which of four periods the times were to be calculated unknown beforehand—The notation of time—Contents of the prophecy—Fulfilment not by chance—Truths of the Gospel foretold as well as facts—Fall of Jewish dispensation connected with the rise of Gospel dispensation—End of original scheme of evidence.

ADMITTING the destruction of Jerusalem to have afforded public evidence of the Mosaic covenant at least having been abolished, yet this fact alone, it may be said, did not to a Jewish mind, or to the mind of a

But the destruction of Temple did not *ipso facto* instal the Gospel, for

<sup>1</sup> Not much has been added, since the first appearance, in 1840, of these comments, on either side in relation to this important passage. With regard, however, to any obscurities attaching to the nice adjustment of dates in this case, as elsewhere in analogous instances, it should be repeated that such revelations of *future contingents* were not issued to give to Israel mere prehistorical information, or to evince that the future was known already to Providence; but, chiefly to prepare a series of events unique and *sui generis*, in terms recognized from the first as *predictive*, provocative, indeed, of interest in the interim, but only to be explained or unsealed when the *denouement* was on foot. But, also, it is plain that such explicit intelligibility and preinformation as is demanded from the text by

heathen, conclusively or of itself evince, to a *certainly*, the substitution of another Law by God. To ourselves, in the present day, it may seem that this acknowledgment ought to follow by necessary consequence; yet, in the absence of all other evidence, it is not, strictly speaking, an immediate inference. But there was another circumstance regarding this catastrophe, besides its indissoluble bearing upon the religious worship of the Jews, which to many persons must have seemed a testimony to the truth of the pretensions of Jesus, more irresistible than any argument which human reason could have supplied.

I have said that the obligation of the Mosaic Law ceased of necessity with the city and Temple of Jerusalem. These last, as we know, expired not by slow declension, but came to a violent termination. Even had this been a casual event, unconnected with any assigned and foreknown intention of God, it would still have put an end to the Law, since the observance of this became thenceforth impossible.

the two  
events are  
quite  
separable  
in idea  
at least,

As the sudden overthrow of the whole Jewish regimen was foretold by its Founder at the very time when the first covenant was proclaimed, we are obliged to consider the future *abolition* of the cultus, also, which was its necessary consequence, as having been from the first included in the Divine scheme. We cannot look upon one as being the act of God, without regarding the other as being His act likewise. But

critics might, in certain cases, have been highly undesirable, and might have defeated the presumed end of Providence. "This would have been the case," says Ignatius, "had Satan understood the birth from a virgin, and the death of the Messiah." For if the vague expectation only of Messiah put all Israel in a tremor and an explosive condition, what would have been the case had this been determined notoriously on one certain year? —a possible collapse of society.—Ed.

the abolition of the Jewish law or cultus, and the institution of the Christian worship, are two things easily separable in idea. If there was any connection between them in the Divine mind or intention, the fact had to be demonstrated not by reason but by the words of revelation.

This point I shall now proceed to examine; and I shall endeavour to show from the Old Testament that the same predicted event by which the termination of the Jewish dispensation was to be made known was also foreshown as the stated signal by which the commencement of the Christian was to be proclaimed.

We read in the Talmud that, after the fall of the city, R. Jose exclaimed, "Alas! the times of the Messiah are now past." By the "times of the Messiah" was understood the calculated period, after which all hope of His coming, according to the Promise, would be at an end. And so clearly is this period, in the opinion of the Jews, now passed by, that an anathema is pronounced in the Talmud upon any one by whom, for the future, the times shall be computed.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the common belief is, that the Messiah has come in some sort, but has not been revealed to the Jews in consequence of the impenitence of the people.

On examining this computation, the passages of Scripture from which the Jews deduced their calculation appear to have been four: viz. Gen. xlix. 10;

but they were combined in prophecy,

as the times began to be defined;

though but negatively at first, by Haggai

<sup>1</sup> According to a Targum, and a more developed Hagadah, Messiah *is* come, but sits in guise of a mendicant at the gates of Rome, as invisibly present in the person of down-trodden Israel—a mystical representation, probably, of the vengeance preparing for the foreign oppressor, or, probably, now, for Gentile Christendom, in the day of Israel's final exaltation.—Ed.



and  
Malachi.

Hag. ii. 7-9; Mal. iii. 1; and Dan. ix. 24-27. I shall reserve the prophecy of Daniel for a particular examination; but with respect to the others, every one of which, as well as that of Daniel, is distinctly referred to the Messiah by the Jews in their Targums, I may observe in general, that they intimate no positive date, but only define the period beyond which He was not to be expected. "He was to come suddenly to His temple;" and in consequence of His personal presence in it "the glory" of this "latter house" was to be greater than "the glory of the former;" and the time of His coming was to be while the city and state of the Jews were subsisting.

These marks, it may be observed, are negative and not affirmative; they do not fix the date when the "desire of all nations" would appear; but only limit the epoch beyond which this hope was not to extend. Whenever the second temple should cease to exist; or whenever "the Sceptre should depart from Judah," and the "Lawgiver from between his feet;" that is, when the Jews should cease to exist as the subjects of a separate state, living under their own laws and institutions, the "times" of the Messiah's coming, as limited by these prophecies, would be at an end. One point, however, is very distinctly and affirmatively foreshown: which is, the dependence of this event upon the city and state and Temple of the Jews. In each of the above predictions the calculation is pinned upon one or other of these two; and when they should have come to an end, all future hope of the Messiah's advent would be excluded.

But  
whence  
the *affirmative*  
marks?

It is plain, however, that at the period within which—some thirty or forty years—the contents of the New Testament were written, no present argument

could be based upon any of the fore-mentioned passages. The second Temple had then lasted about five hundred years ; and for anything which, at that time, could have been proved from them, it might have lasted five hundred more. Nevertheless, it is clearly intimated in the New Testament, and the testimony of Josephus is still more explicit, that the Jews, in that age, universally believed the period to have arrived when "the fulfilment of all things" was at hand. Many false prophets and pseudo-Messiahs were daily arising ; and from this date, Josephus tells us, the public mind was kept in perpetual disquiet, owing to daily rumours, and successive attempts at imposition. This agitation of the popular mind was by no means confined to Judæa or to the Jews ; but at present my business is with these alone.

All this having been premised, the question, then, is, from what passage or passages of Scripture was this eager belief and expectation derived ? The answer to this question is not difficult ; for there is only *one* passage in the whole volume of the Old Testament from which any conjecture as to the actual point of time when the Messiah was to appear could possibly have been formed. In that passage alone, the coming of the Messiah and, with this, the destruction also of Jerusalem are spoken of as if they were but parts of one and the same conclusive event ; and the generation of mankind, in which they would come to pass, is almost as clearly defined as if the Prophet had been speaking of a past occurrence, instead of one which belonged to posterity.

These are  
found in  
Dan. ix.  
alone.

The prophecy to which I am now alluding is to be found in the ninth chapter of Daniel, and is well known as the vision of the "seventy weeks." There

are one or two points connected with this remarkable prediction which have not always been adequately stated ; and which, I think, entitle it to a higher degree of attention, especially when referred to the particular period before us, than it has always received.

Its  
admitted  
antiquity.

I need hardly say that no reasonable doubt exists as to the antiquity of the Book of Daniel. There is demonstrable proof of its having been written centuries before the birth of Christ, and that it was inserted in the Jewish Canon immediately after the captivity. In the opinion of Josephus he was to be considered as the greatest of all the Prophets, inasmuch as not only did he foretell things to come, but also, as he says, the exact *time* when they were to happen. When Limborch, in his “*Amica Collatio*,” asks Orobio to state his reasons for believing in the Divine authority of Moses, at the same time that he rejects the authority of Christ, the answer is that Daniel himself—who beyond all doubt and contestation was divinely inspired—has given his testimony to Moses. I quote this, to show the sort of exclusive estimation in which this Prophet continues to be held among the Jews ; the ground of which it would perhaps not be easy to explain, except we suppose it to be the opinion entertained by them of the particular prophecy I am here adverting to.

Josephus  
quotes  
ch. ix.

It is plain, however, that the part of it to which Josephus was more immediately referring must be that part where Daniel foretells the period when the “people of the Prince that was to come would destroy the city and the sanctuary.” For although there are other remarkable predictions in this book, as that of the fourth and fifth kingdoms (to which also Josephus alludes), yet *this* is the only one in which the exact

"time" is specified. The Book itself, in other parts of it, has given occasion to much controversy, but as regards the particular passage to which our attention is now directed, there is, and always has been, a sufficient agreement. What differences there are among commentators are immaterial in the present argument. The reason for questioning the prophetical character of the matter is really drawn from the style in which it is expressed, rather than from any supposed ambiguity in its meaning, or any solid doubt about its genuineness. What Cicero says of the Sibylline oracles was alleged by Porphyry against the Book of Daniel: *hoc scriptoris est, non furentis; adhibentis diligentiam, non insani*. I shall not stop to argue this point, which may be summarily dismissed by observing that, be the style of this prophecy what it may, it was demonstrably published some two hundred<sup>1</sup> years before the event which it predicted came to pass; and was always understood beforehand to refer to that event. Admitting so much, who the writer was, or where he lived, or at what precise period, are points which, however otherwise important, have no weight in the question which I am now considering.

Omitting, then, all mere critical inquiries, and confining our attention to the contents of Daniel's prophecy of the "*seventy weeks*," it may be as well to premise that the word "week" is not limited in Scripture language to the enumeration of days, but is frequently employed in the Old Testament as a reckoning of years. Thus in Leviticus, Moses, speaking of the Jubilee, says, "*Thou shalt number seven*"

Term  
"weeks"  
in Scrip-  
ture use.

<sup>1</sup> From B.C. 170, the very latest possible date, to A.D. 30, when first Jesus was made known to the Jews, is still two hundred years; to fall of Jerusalem, two hundred and forty.—Ed.

*sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years.*"<sup>1</sup> And again in Numbers; "*After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year.*"<sup>2</sup> The same way of speaking occurs in Ezekiel: "*And thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days; I have appointed thee each day for a year.*"<sup>3</sup> This form of expression does not appear to have been confined to the people of Judæa. Varro<sup>4</sup> tells us that at the time when he was writing, he had entered into "the twelfth week of his life;" *se jam duodecim annorum hebdomadam ingressum esse*. Another passage to the same effect is found in Macrobius; "*From the sixth to the seventh hebdomad, there is a diminution of power, indeed, though it be not apparent; and therefore in some republics the custom has been, that no one should be enrolled to serve in war, after the sixth.*" *Sed a sextâ usque ad septimam fit quidem diminutio, sed occulta; ideo nonnullarum republicanarum hic mos est, ut post sextam ad militiam nemo rogetur.*

Words of  
Daniel.

With this preface, I shall now come to the passage of Daniel on which I am about to offer some remarks. His words are these, *Seventy weeks are determined upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks: the street shall be built again,*

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xxv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xiv. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. iv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Aulus Gellius, iii. c. 10.



and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Now it is certain—as certain as a constant and uniform tradition and the total absence of any serious deposition to the contrary, can make any similar fact—that the *Book* of Daniel in general has always constituted part of the Jewish canon; and therefore must have been in existence some hundred years before the death of Christ. In speaking of that event, we may observe that this famous prophecy does not merely negatively limit the period, as in the instance of the prophecies of Malachi before adverted to, but positively intimates the exact point of time when it was to happen. Moreover, it marks this point, not only by numbering the intervening years, but by the accessory specification of a cotemporaneous but completely independent event, the destruction of the holy city and temple; doubling, if we may so speak, the difficulty of the problem, so as to exclude all subsequent supposition of any mere *accidental* coincidence between the two; and this is done in language so direct and unambiguous, as to prevent all dispute as to its meaning.

A certain historical fact, namely, the going forth of a public decree, is there specified; four hundred

Daniel  
was always  
in the  
canon.

Sacrifice  
was to  
cease when

Messiah  
should  
have come  
and been  
cut off.

and ninety years after that the Messiah was to appear. At this time the oblation and the sacrifice, both *mincha* and holocaust, were to cease. These last were to come to an end, not gradually, but by the violent destruction of the city and temple at the hand of a foreign power. Moreover, Messiah, when He came, was to suffer *violent* or *judicial death*, for He was to be *cut off*. Other parts of the prophecy may have lain in obscurity, but there was no obscurity in this language; neither respecting these two cardinal points, nor about the name of the city or people, could there have been, at the time when the prophecy was fulfilled, any possible controversy either among Jews or Christians—it was urged in the very crisis to the zealots by Josephus in person—nor indeed (supposing them to have this prophecy in their hands) even among heathens. It was a plain record, and clear of all obscurity as to its grammatical meaning. The only debatable part of the document related to the identity of the person whom the writer intended to signify under the description of “Messiah the Prince.” Whether, in short, Jesus of Nazareth was “that Prophet which should come into the world,” or did they look for another?

But till  
this  
*violent*  
*subversion*,  
the case for  
the new  
law was  
but pre-  
cious ;

If we go back by an effort of imagination to the age we are now upon, this last question as to the quality of Jesus presented difficulties which time has now cleared up. But looking to the whole of the great question at issue, so long as the laws and institutions of Moses continued ostensibly to be unrepealed, I do not see by what *argument* a Jew, as such, could be *compelled*, in reason, to believe in the Divine substitution of the Gospel covenant. The miracles, indeed, as wrought by Jesus, together with the improvements

of His demeanour, explain the ground of their belief on the part of the happy individuals by whom it was, in fact, embraced; but the final determination of the question in the mind of a Jew, as such, depended then upon testimony from the prophecies of the Old Testament; and in what way the abolition of the Mosaic Law could be so *demonstrated* as to leave no alternative but adherence to the Gospel, while Jerusalem was yet standing, and so the prophecies still open, are problems which, as far as I can see, involved a question respecting which a wise man, without any imputation upon his fairness, might be supposed to have suspended his judgment; in expectation, like Gamaliel, of some conclusive demonstration of the Divine will.

So far, however, as respected the obligation to observe the Law of Moses, this question would seem to have been determined negatively the moment that the desolation of Jerusalem and Judæa had been executed; but, then, that fact, as I have said, did not demonstrate *per se*, or on the spot, the quite distinct position of the inauguration from the Most High of a *new* covenant through Christ. This was, then, a different question. The miracles of Christ may have rightly persuaded men of His Divine *authority* in general, but they were no absolute evidence of His being the Shiloh, or the Prophet named in Deuteronomy, or the Messiah. The truth of *this*, in the mind of a Jew, could only be *proved* by its unquestionable correspondence with the Old Testament prophecies.

Here, then, it is, and at this crisis of the argument, that the great prophecy of *Daniel* would come into the evidences. By its connection of the advance of Christianity in the world with the cotemporaneous and

and even  
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but for the  
connection  
of both  
events in  
Daniel's  
words.

violent abolition of the Mosaic dispensation in one and the same prophecy—or declaration of the Almighty—the two events were plainly declared to be but separate portions, in the Divine mind, of one and the same revelation and decree.

This prophecy of the seventy weeks would seem to be as little ambiguous as any in the Old Testament ; yet none has given rise to a greater variety of opinions. One cause of this has evidently been an endeavour, on the part of commentators, to assign a more punctual and curious fulfilment to the prophecy, than we can reasonably suppose to have been in the Divine contemplation.

Prophecy was not given to evince God's foresight, but promote plan of redemption.

Assuming the prophecies of the Old Testament to have been written under Divine illumination, it is not to be thought that the object of them was merely to demonstrate to mankind, as customarily maintained, God's knowledge of future events or the infallibility of universal Scripture.<sup>1</sup> Some other and still higher end than this must be presumed, if we suppose the Almighty to have been their Author. We know that the general design of God's disclosures to the Jews looked to a much more *specific* revelation of Himself than this ; and we may presume that, in predicting the period of any particular event connected with His great overruling or primordial Promise to the human race, the end in immediate contemplation must have been one which made it necessary for those who were the object of it, to be informed withal at the proper time of the very generation within which it was to happen, and not merely to excite admiration, by an

<sup>1</sup> As with Newton, Keith, or even Davison—or that the volume, *en bloc*, was inspired—and so infallible. All, however, that the events have *proved* is that certain persons were themselves illuminated on occasion in view of a remote providential object.—Ed.

exact coincidence, between the words of prophecy and the accuracy of calculation.

Had the Jews known beforehand the very month or year in which the Messiah was to be “cut off,” nothing short of an almost miraculous interposition of Providence could have constrained them, as was before observed, to be themselves the instruments in the case of any person in whom the requisite signs should have been recognized, of bringing such event to pass. Such a knowledge on their part would plainly have been rather a hindrance to the design of God than a help to its fulfilment.<sup>1</sup> The end for which the prophecy was presumably intended required two things only :—first, that the coming of the Messiah should be preceded by a knowledge that such approach was at hand, antecedently to His actual appearance ; and secondly, that, after receiving its fulfilment, this supreme fact should be capable of proper proof. In the present instance we know from common history that the first of these objects was certainly obtained. The Messiah was confessedly by all expected at the time when Jesus appeared. And now with respect to the second, we shall see that this was too abundantly provided for. In truth, if we carry along with us, when examining this prophecy, a recollection of what was just now said about the great end, which, it is to be presumed, was in the Divine view when this remarkable vision was communicated to Daniel, we can hardly fail to be struck with the more than wisdom—*I had almost called it the ingenuity*—by which

For this two things only needed : that Messiah should be expected about the right time, and proved when come.

<sup>1</sup> Such anticipation accumulated upon one year known certainly beforehand, might, judging from our record of only very imperfectly analogous cases, have convulsed cotemporary society, as with the epidemic persuasion, A.D. 1000, that the thousandth year of the apocalypse had expired.—ED.



the means for effecting that precise end were preconcerted.

Calculation could not begin till fall of city.

Before this prophecy had received its fulfilment, it was impossible for those whom it concerned to pitch upon any one *definite* point of time on which to fix their expectation. For although the number of *weeks* was definite, yet the period from which they were to be calculated was *not* definite. *Four* decrees are named in Scripture as having gone out for the restoration of the *temple*.<sup>1</sup> The interval between the first and the last of these is upwards of *eighty* years; but, it must be remembered, it was not until after not only the death of Christ but after the destruction of Jerusalem that the epoch contemplated in the prophecy could have been properly ascertained. From the moment, however, that the city was destroyed, all doubts were at an end. For then, by counting backward, the period from which the weeks were to be computed was made evident, and the truth of the prophecy was placed beyond dispute; whereas, anterior to this, nothing more was clearly revealed except the near approach of the Messiah.

There is also another circumstance important to remark—which is the notation of time here adopted. A common form of computation in Scripture is by generations: “In the fourth generation,” says God to Abraham, “thy children shall come hither again;”<sup>2</sup> and in addressing the Jews, whether by way of threats or promises, it is often under the appellation of a stubborn

<sup>1</sup> The “going forth,” *i.e.* the long negotiation or complete execution of the decree, or *arrêt*, for the reseating of the Jews in Jerusalem was matter of time; but, in the Divine sight, and in order to the Advent, etc., is viewed as one transaction.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xv. 16.

and rebellious, or of a pure and upright generation,<sup>1</sup> that they are described. By this term were designated all who were living in the world at any fixed period; and the words of the Psalmist might give us to understand that the space of time implied in such case was "threescore years and ten, or fourscore years," which he tells us were the allotted years of man upon earth.

Now, though the *form* of expression is changed, yet the same measure of time is adopted in the prophecy before us. "Seventy weeks of years," says Daniel, "are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city;" that is, seven times seventy years, or seven generations. Moreover, the period of these generations is not divided into astronomical portions of time, but is computed by hebdomads, or "weeks." In calculating the several events foretold, it is therefore not the "year" which we are told to look to, but the hebdomad. When it is said that such a fact happened in a certain year, we do not mean that it occurred in the last month of that year, but in any. So also in the interpretation of this prophecy of Daniel, the point to ascertain is, simply in what week of the assigned generation the several particulars which he enumerates occurred, and not in what year of that week, whether it be in the first, or second, or third. It will be important, on many accounts, to remember this remark when examining the passage before us; but especially because there is some uncer-

Mere  
chronological  
niceties  
not important here.

<sup>1</sup> Words often in the mouth of Jesus Christ. "This generation," this "evil and incredulous generation," will only be satisfied with a "sign"—and He intimates a very significant one. "This generation shall not pass away till all," *i.e.* till Daniel "be filled to the full." Again, the only "sign" will be that of Jonah—*i.e.* His own resurrection after their great crime; with the implicit warning to Jerusalem to repent, after some forty years, as Nineveh *did* on the re-appearance of Jonah after forty days.—ED.

tainty in the chronology of the events referred to. I do not mean that we are in danger of committing any wide error in fixing the year in which Cyrus became master of Babylon, or in determining the name of the year before Christ which answers to the seventh or the twentieth of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, but we do not find that learned men are exactly agreed in their calculations. Another source of inexactitude is, that the length of the Chaldean years does not precisely agree with that of the Julian ; sixty-nine years of the latter being equal to seventy of the former ; a difference which, if not rectified from time to time, in ten generations would have amounted to as many years.

These variations would be important in settling a mere point in chronology, but they are quite immaterial in the case before us. It was equally impossible for Daniel to discover, without the help of Divine illumination, that God would destroy Jerusalem in the last *seven* years of the eighth *generation* from the time in which he lived, as it was to know the *day*, or month, or hour, of that event. And if, in consequence of this *prediction*, those who lived in the *eighth* generation, that is, from John to Jesus, were in expectation of those events coming to pass, which *did* come to pass, there could have been little room, in such a case, for any Israelite to reasonably doubt, either as to the providential character of those events when witnessed, or of the Divine inspiration by which they had been foretold.

Bearing then these things in mind, let us now take the passage in our hands, and see what it contains. And first, for the period or periods from which the several computations are to be made: the words are, “from the going forth of the commandment to restore

Jerusalem." Now there were four decrees to this effect, of which three are mentioned by Ezra, and the last by Nehemiah. The first was by *Cyrus*, about the year 536 B.C. The second by *Darius Hystaspes*, about the year 519 B.C. The third in the seventh year of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, 457 B.C. The fourth thirteen years later, in the *twentieth* of the same, 444 B.C. If we turn to Daniel we shall also see that the several periods to be counted are seventy weeks, sixty-nine weeks, the week next following the sixty-nine weeks, one week, and a part of a week.

Taking the chronology of our Bibles (and that of any other system will equally answer the purpose according to the latitude of calculation which the prophecy as just now explained admits of), and comparing these dates with the several events in the history of Jesus Christ, which I shall now enumerate, we shall find the results to be quite incapable of any explanation, except on the hypothesis of a Divine inspiration.

The starting-point given by Daniel is the edict for restoring Jerusalem, of which, as I have just said, there were four.

Supposing the edict issued in the seventh of *Artaxerxes*—the commission of *Ezra*—to be that one of the four really intended, then our starting-point will be 457 B.C. Computation from 7th of Artaxerxes.

Daniel's first prophecy is, that from this starting-point until an "end is made of sins, and the transgression is finished, and reconciliation made for iniquity" (all which according to our interpretation was effected by the death of Christ) should be seventy weeks or 490 years,—accordingly, from B.C. 457 to A.D. 33, when Christ died, = 490 years, or seventy weeks.

Daniel's second prophecy is that from the same

starting-point to Messiah the prince, *i.e.* to the first preaching of the kingdom of the Messiah by John the Baptist (for “the Law and the Prophets were until John, but now the kingdom of God is preached”) should be  $7 + 60 + 2 = 69$  weeks or 483 years.

Accordingly from B.C. 457 to A.D. 26, when John the Baptist first preached the kingdom of the Messiah = 483 years.

Daniel’s third prophecy is, that AFTER, that is in the week after the  $60 + 2$  weeks which he had just mentioned, *i.e.* really in the week after the sixty-ninth week, and therefore during the seventieth week, Messiah shall be cut off.

Accordingly Jesus Christ was put to death in the end of the seventieth week.

Daniel’s fourth prophecy is that for one week or seven years he should confirm the covenant with many.

Accordingly the ministry of Christ, including that of John the Baptist, lasted about seven years or one week.

Daniel’s fifth prophecy is, that in the midst, or, as it should be translated, in the one division of the week just mentioned in which Christ preached, the sacrifice and oblation were to cease (for the Hebrew word *והצי* means not the “middle,” but the “division ;” “*dimidium hebdomadæ*” is the translation in Houbigant’s edition of the Hebrew Bible).

Accordingly in the last half of the week in which Christ taught, the sacrifice and oblation were virtually put an end to,<sup>1</sup> cancelled in heaven, or superseded by His own sacrifice. And in connection with these events, the Prophet twice, in the plainest language, predicts the utter destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem by a foreign prince and army.

<sup>1</sup> Now become “*sacrificia Diaboli*,” says S. Jerome.—ED.



*“ And the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”* And again,—

*“ And for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.”*

Now if a person should say that the coincidences here pointed out happened only by chance, it would, I think, be a sufficient reply, that it is not in the power of any arithmetical notation to express in numbers the amount of the improbability represented by the agreement of so many events; against every one of which the odds *à priori* would have been what may be called infinite. But when we bear in mind that one of these events was the total destruction of one of the greatest cities of antiquity; and the other no less than the advent of an Individual whose coming into the world has exercised a more important influence over the condition of mankind in general than any other historical event which is upon record,—it is evident that a solution of this kind is in reality no solution at all. Porphyry maintained that the last chapters of the Book of Daniel were but history in disguise, and must have been written after the events, because in his opinion it was impossible that historic statements so circumstantial as those of ch. xi. in particular should have been written before.<sup>1</sup> Assum-

Porphyry's  
view dis-  
missed.

<sup>1</sup> The most thorough and exhaustive discussion of this illustrious pericope—within my limited knowledge—is to be found in Pusey, pp. 164–233. Any construction other than the Christian is, I think, shown impossible, at the same time that the whole material, so far as it is known, for opposite judgment or conjecture, is exhibited at its best, and with exemplary

ing the supposition of a Divine inspiration to be impossible, he took up perhaps the only position that would seem to be open. But the early date for the Book is demonstrable, as I have said, even in the present day; in the days of the Apostles it must have been not only demonstrable but notorious.

Before bringing these remarks to a close, we may mention that the agreement of this well-known prophecy with the doctrinal *truths* of the Gospel is not less exact than with the matters of fact connected with the history of its founder.

Those truths, as they have been received by mankind, are as clearly enounced by Daniel as they were by the Apostles themselves. "Seventy weeks," says he, "are determined upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." The Messiah, moreover, was also to "be cut off, but not for Himself." It is not necessary to offer any comment upon this part of the prophecy: the conformity of it with the faith subsequently established in the world by Jesus Christ, is a matter of which we are witnesses.

It was the  
fall of the  
city as in-  
terpreted  
from on  
High, that

I have now said, I think, enough to demonstrate that in the scheme of prophecy, the rise of the Christian and the downfall of the Mosaic dispensation were indis-  
solubly united. No one who believed in the cessation

fulness; even the naturalistic reader need not go beyond those pages to find all the *matter* for his own case. *Vide* Pusey, Lect. iv. pp. 164-233, on "The prophecy of the seventy weeks, and of the death of Messiah, and the attempt to make the seventy weeks end with the death of Antiochus Epiphanes," etc. P. limits chaps. viii. and ix. to Antiochus.—ED.

of the latter, as declared in the sudden desolation of the Jewish state and nation, could see the evident connection of the same event with the coming of the Messiah, and doubt the Divine authority of Jesus. A person might deny both propositions (as the Jews persisted in doing), but he could not admit the one without at the same time acceding to the other.

settled at last the case for the Gospel.

Accordingly, from this period, we hear little more of Judaizing Christians; no further allusion is made, in any Christian writings now in our possession, to the duty of renouncing the Law of Moses; there was no longer any dispute about circumcision, or about the righteousness that was by the works of the Law:—such controversies were settled for ever. From this period “the vision and the prophecy were sealed up,” and each party made its election of one side or the other. There was thenceforth no intermediate class, whether calling themselves Jews or Christians, or at least, none of sufficient importance to deserve attention.

Here closed the evidences proper.

Parties had taken their side.

At this momentous crisis, the scheme of evidence proper, on which Christianity was originally established as the proper motive for adhesion to it, came to a close. The question whether it were of Divine or of human authority must stand or fall on the facts which had at this critical period been exhibited. No public proof having the character of a testimony from Deity was afterwards vouchsafed; no further miraculous attestation was afforded; nor need the Christian be now concerned by any difficulties or objections raised from the occurrences of a later period. If, indeed, the facts related by the Evangelists did not really happen; or if the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the Messiah had not been fulfilled in Jesus, at the solemn epoch when Jerusalem ceased to

No Divine proof since given. But what was once true is true for all time.

be numbered among the cities of the earth, the argument is as an argument at an end:—nothing that has occurred since can make that now to be true which was then untrue. But the converse also of this proposition is at least as plain: what then was true cannot be upset by anything that has since occurred. If the Divine authority of Christianity had at that period been properly demonstrated, then—explain as we please its after success, whether by natural causes or by Divine ones; deem as we may of its doctrines, as ever so contrary to our own notions of probability, still, except they can be shown to be absurd or metaphysically impossible, or evidently subversive of the happiness of mankind—they must be received as true. I do not merely mean to say that they must be received as possible, or credible, or highly probable, though such they be:—but that we must regard them as so many verities which cannot be called in question without impugning the veracity of God, and which involve a certain responsibility on the part of those minds to whom they have so been made known.

No room  
for mere  
opinion.

There is at this point no intermediate ground, no room for what is called opinion. The contrary way of speaking is indeed customary. It is common to hear our motives for assent described as resting upon cumulative and probable, not upon demonstrative proofs. The distinction to be drawn lies in the word—rest. Christianity is *supported* by many probable arguments—especially as it recommends itself to individuals—but it does not *rest* upon them. There are many facts in natural philosophy drawn from the flux or reflux of the sea, the alternations of winter and summer, of light and darkness, as well as many direct astronomical observations, all confirming our assent to or

confidence in the "*Principia*" of Newton. But the truth itself of Newton's "*Principia*," nevertheless, does not *rest* upon the evidence of such facts and observations, but on one great and simple axiom. So also in Christianity there are many considerations converging from different quarters, some external and some internal, uniting in the testimony which they bear to the Divine origin of the Gospel: nevertheless it is not upon such that its obligatory authority ultimately rests, but upon the revelations made already to mankind in the Old Testament, that is, in the Mosaic Institution, and the Prophets.

As, for our present selves, it mainly rests on the subsequent realization in *Christendom*, of the prophetic revelations made by Christ to the Apostles, especially on Mount Olivet, and promulgated by these last as recorded in the New Testament.

#### NOTE.

##### DAN. IX. 24-27.

In the few remarks here offered to the reflective reader—and it is such an one that these discourses hope to find—upon this illustrious prediction, he is reminded that such topics are here treated only so far as may serve to evince, beyond reasonable question, the agency of a Divine will, behind and anterior to any series of facts falling upon the scene of history. They are adduced to show to the "intelligent" the "finger of the most High," in the apparently secular event. Subordinate, however, to this, in the order of proof at least, was the contribution made by the same prophetic economy to the formation in the generations intervening between the two terms of a state of *expectation* alert enough to secure an interested curiosity on the part of that generation which might be so happy as to be cotemporary with the great revelation when placed on the temporal scene. This is not urged in any disparagement of other Divine or edifying purposes signalized by pious writers in the prophetic economy as manifested in Israel, but the dispensation of prediction is shown to have been not an ornamental feature only, or a moral or even a doctrinal advance, but a strictly logical or organic con-



stituent of the vast and beneficent problem, so laboriously realized at last. It does not appear that the great cosmic purpose of the Almighty, since the lapse of the temporal creation, could have been imperatively *authenticated* to the intelligence of the creature by other conceivable contrivance. But, if so, the maxim must obtain, in the case of omnipotence at least, *qui vult finem vult et modum*. What may be perhaps in itself but a temporal incident, is shown to have been rooted in a supra-temporal order.

It is, then, in no other sense, with our author, at least, that what is sometimes called "The argument from prophecy," is interested in the revelation of the *ninth*, or perhaps *second* chapters of this book.

For even such critics as betray most eagerness to block out, where they may, the hand of the superior order in temporal things, are, for this very purpose, fain to assign for this prediction a date of at least two hundred years, or nearly two hundred and fifty years short of the solemn catastrophe on which it abuts. No critic has ever placed the publication of the great pericope (ch. ix. 24-27) at any point *later* than one hundred and seventy years short of the divine event on which hinges the chronology of the nineteenth century, or else two hundred years before the public manifestation of the Messiah, while the great crash and collapse which forms the culmination of these monumental words, was delayed by the indulgence of Heaven for yet forty more probationary years. A young teacher in some academy in the bottom of Germany might think such feat of speculation quite simple, but the case would not so seem to any one experienced in great affairs, or even "to the eye," as Wordsworth says, "that hath kept watch on man's humanity."

As the appeal of the great Father was not, as the sages of old thought it should have been, made to a restricted group of relatively superior persons, but to that conscience which is the same in every item of humanity, it is only natural that the decision should not turn upon any mere accident of education, or upon ingenuity of textual experts, but upon such material as is in the hands of us all, upon two definite factors,—that is, our own knowledge of the latest *possible* date of its publication, and the books of Josephus, which seem rather a deutero-canonical supplement to the new canon than a merely secular narrative. It is, then, for the wise in independent speculation, to explain how a writer in such conditions of time and history as are here supposed, could of his own sagacity, at such distance of time, and that almost to the moment—for it is, in any case, so dated back for this purpose,—combine in one prediction two events, both so utterly distinct, as are the advent of the Personage which has revolutionized, so to speak, the whole future of the race, and withal the utter abolition and dispersion of that fated people, who are to this day the monument of that stroke of

Providence. However extensive the material taken in, the mind cannot be too large to whom such contemplation would bring no astonishment.

The name of Providence has been mentioned, because, so far as our experience enables one to judge, such knowledge could have alone been communicated to them by the Power that overrules the eventful course of this lower world—this is shown, by the very fact, to be referrible to no other hand. But should the critic, in place of such obvious reference, borrow from such, as a working theory, the resource of a fatally evolving cosmic spirit, the problem still remains in all its importunity, and will but leave a difficulty the more, for facts so abrupt bespeak a seemingly unnatural evolution. All this would seem to be no more than simple reason, nor, as has been said, does any gain seem to accrue from this reduction of the interval from the *terminus a quo* by some centuries, for two events so unexampled and so independent were no more easily to be conceived or located at a distance of two hundred, than of five hundred years from the remarkable consummation.

There remains, indeed, the supposition, or rather the confident assertion, that these serious words were written in the reign of Antiochus, and passed with the more knowing for no more than a recital of facts, just transpired, or in present operation, though falsely placed to the credit of an ancient and venerated character, for certain politic purposes.

It is not, however, unnatural to enquire what might be the object of such fabrication. There are minds, indeed, to whom it seems simple as day to assert, without, however, an atom of confirmation, that the prophecy had been drawn up and circulated through the ranks of patriots in revolt, half zealots, half brigands; on the pretext that the insurgents were on the point of an immediate triumph, which had been for some centuries settled in heaven. Three or four interpretations in this sense are offered, consistent only in their common inconsistency. For in what way the insurgents would be encouraged by the proclamations that the Deliverer was himself to fall, and that not on the field of glory, but *cut off*, an object of Divine reprobation, at a moment when the very occasion for the insurrection, the temple, that is, and metropolis, were to be abolished—is not easy to conceive.

What put the inventors upon the shift of this expedient, is a supposed pre-existent epidemic Messianic expectation. But, in such case, the matters in circulation would have failed of their intent, for nothing is more striking to after-thinkers, during the whole Maccabean revolt, than the even total absence of reference to any Messiah at all. It would, in such cases, have seemed, while the matter was about, more natural to have invested the great Judas Maccabeus himself with such character, or even for

him to have assumed it; but there is no reference in the book to any future character other than that of "the prophet who should, in time to come," direct the definitive disposal of the treasures rescued from the sack of the first temple. The patriarch Simon also, on his death-bed, refers, indeed, to Daniel, but only in common with others who had sealed their loyalty with martyrdom. And though Haggai specifies the place, and Malachi both the place and the Precursor, yet the "Desire of the Gentiles," "The Lord whom they so ardently sought"—for such, alone, are the terms applied to Him—is only designated as an instrument of Divine judgment upon the authorities of Judah herself, but by no means as a victorious deliverer from the Gentile.

This is so true that it was first of all from this passage of Daniel, that, in connection possibly with the remarkable prophecy of the fifth monarchy in ch. ii., the name Messiah was definitively fixed or appropriated to a person or individual in popular appellation at all. In the Psalms the great apparition is usually disguised under the name of "David." In certain passages He is the "Seed," or the "Shiloh," or, "He that shall come." Other figurative indications abound in the Prophets, who seem to view His personal advent rather as a necessary element or condition of that age of gold which the mystical David was to inaugurate. It would be probably found more true to say that this famous passage was the *origin* rather than the close of any disposition to revolutionary emotions. This prophecy had, indeed, at *that* time, possibly the contrary effect of tranquillizing and setting at rest the Jewish mind by fixing, once for all, the epoch of deliverance, and that at a date so remote as to put any movement in the interval out of the question.

For how great is the contrast between the effect of such utterance, which, if made at all under the condition pretended, certainly fell flat, and those emotions which the same words awakened towards the time when, in the wisdom of God, they were to become really operative. At the close of some five hundred years from the assigned date, this prediction, which forms, so to speak, if not the motive for its production, the jewel set in the last half of the book was really in the mouth of every peasant in Palestine, of every zealot in the wilderness. The same state of things comes out at every step of the life of the Lord. It was then a main cause of the formidable excitement, that, about the time of the entry upon His human sphere, aroused the vigilance of the governments at that time, as well as the subsequent enterprises of the anti-Christ, who did so much towards bringing about the very catastrophe fore-shown in this Prophecy; and which Josephus, who saw in it,

as did Jeremiah in the Babylonian invasion, the hand of the Almighty, was appointed to record : *κτῆμα ἐς αἰὲλ.*

A man of great soul and fiery genius, abounding in a liberty of spirit characteristic of the ancient saints, in a comment for the edification of Eustochium and Marcella, notices, but only to push aside, the objections of Porphyry, and then confines himself to the exhibition of the conformity of the prophetic chapters with matter known from secular history, till he comes inevitably to this calculation of the "weeks;" as involved in the statements of ch. ix. "No question," says Jerome, "has been more disputed than this among the highest authorities of the Christian Church; the adjustment, that is, of the events to the divisions of the 485 years," and so he retires behind the great authorities whom he cites: Julius Africanus, to whom he assigns the first place in the list, and perhaps also in his own mind; Eusebius, Methodius, Hippolytus, Origen, Tertullian, and the rest. Of these calculations the most remarkable would seem that of Africanus, who, in his universal chronology, from A.M. 5594 to A.D. 221, places the *terminus à quo* in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, making the 489th year fall in with the death of the Lord. Eusebius is much more embarrassed, for he sees the "anointed Prince" in Zerobabel or Joshua, at the same time that the "daily sacrifice was abolished" by the passion of the Lord, "after which," says he, "all things done in the temple were but *sacrificia Diaboli*." All the rest determine the *whole* passage, with more or less success, upon the Messianic times exclusively, or upon the last seventy years of Jerusalem.

After this, however, is introduced a sort of representative Hebrew, who, in a kind of monologue, is reputed to summarize the more authorized notions then current in Palestine. He too dates the "weeks" from Cyrus, and understands by them 489 years. Only the Jews, says he, place the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, *last* in order, as they say they are entitled to do, thus making them to extend from the sack of the city by Vespasian to its total devastation and their expulsion, even from Palestine, under Hadrian, after the revolt of Barcochebas, about A.D. 120.

The "*everlasting* justice" or "law" is here Messiah; and thus, towards the *end* of the seventy weeks, the temple was indeed to be destroyed, for, *after* sixty-three weeks, *occidetur Christus* (here apparently the chosen people only), and *non erit ejus* the kingdom, or that which they had supposed they were to recover. "So they go on," says St. Jerome, "*parum curantes* that for this compilation they require a period of no less than ninety-nine weeks, or 696 years after the Hebrew calculation." Other parts would seem to imply, for the statement here is somewhat indistinct, that it was Bar-cochebas that was the slain Messiah (*occidetur Christus*), as, indeed, he *was* proclaimed to be by the great Akiba,



who, with the mystic cabalist, R. Simeon, was so deeply compromised in the insurrection in which he also fell.

A statement in the form of a legend or Hagadah is given from the Talmud by M. Deutz. A voice was heard crying, "Who has revealed my secrets to the sons of men?" Up rose Jonathan ben Uzziel and said, "It is I, but not for mine own honour, nor of my father's house, but only that disputes may cease in Israel." He was further about to reveal or pen the Targum (or traditional *oral* version or comment) on the Hagiographa (Daniel, Psalms, etc.); when a voice was heard, "Enough!" and, "Why?" Because the very day of the Messiah was revealed *therein*, that is in Daniel.

The passage, quoted also by Drach, is significant as showing the great credit of Jonathan, and the motive which had led him to put, for the first time, the *oral* understanding of the Prophets into writing; namely, to reduce the widely disseminated synagogues to some uniformity of congregational treatment; while it intimates, withal, the reason of the great and growing reserve obtaining with the authorities as to Messianic prophecies, lest popular excitement should compromise them with the secular powers; we discover also the motives of a certain mystery and shyness in the matter of Daniel, so that the laity, so to speak, were much discouraged from any attempt at computing the date of the Messiah. To an inquiry when He would come, a Rabbi would answer, "To-day, if ye would hear His voice" (Psalm xciv.), referred to by St. Paul to Hebrews.

It evinces also the singular way with which the teachers dealt with their prophecies, and notably this of Daniel, which in the last days was by far the most important and *operative*. They would seem at times to have tampered with Daniel in an anti-Syrian sense, as was the case with the Targumists at Alexandria under the jealous Ptolemies; in any case, it was kept as much as might be out of popular recital, and relegated with the Psalms, which had their critical passages, and, from analogous cautions, the Canticles and even Proverbs, to the safer obscurity of the Hagiographa.

The truth is that oracular rumours, whether sacred or profane, were of old very delicate matters, and occupied the popular mind. Hence the importance given to the Sibyllina at Rome, and the unquiet suspicion of the provincial governors in general of the unsocial but ubiquitous tribes who were known to cherish in secret such inflammatory treasure.

This would seem a main reason why the *authority* of the prophetic books was declined by the Sadducees, Politiques, or Romanizers, as shown in the language of Caiaphas; why Jonathan was not allowed to popularise Daniel, and the cause of the systematic depreciation, since the establishment of Christianity, by more recent Rabbins of the prophecies in general. The expositor *incedebat per ignes* in diverse senses.—ED.



## CHAPTER IV.

### PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE HEATHEN.

Prophecies relating to heathen nations—Christianity rejected by the Jews, accepted by the heathen—Calling of the Gentiles the proper subject of Prophecy—Rapid progress of Christianity—Early converts chiefly Jews—Number of the heathen converts after the destruction of Jerusalem—Argument of early Christians—Justin—Irenæus—Tertullian—Origen.

THE object of the chapters just preceding has been to examine generally the true use and design of the Old Testament. But there are some prophecies which I have passed over without notice, as not having any direct or necessary connection with the proofs proper to Christianity. The predictions to which I am alluding, relate to the fortunes and vicissitudes of the Jewish and other surrounding nations. The greater number of these received their completion before the birth of Christ. One, the most remarkable of any, that which related to the dispersion of the Jews, is still fulfilling under our eyes. But none of these have entered into any part of the reasoning on which I have placed the original belief of Christianity. It is, then, a natural question to ask: What was the use and intention of prophecies such as these? The answer to this inquiry will lead to one or two points deserving of examination. And as this subject is, in itself, one of deep interest, not to

Prophecies as relating to heathens.

the theologian merely, but also to the philosopher and the historian, I propose throwing together some remarks, suggested to my mind by the above question, hoping to incite others to prosecute a task of which I have merely sketched an outline.

Cause of  
this was  
not mira-  
cles alone;

It is clear, from the New Testament, that the belief of Christianity, after the death of its Founder and first preachers, must have spread with an augmented, and not a diminished rate of increase. Now this supposition, explain it as we will, seems to be altogether inconsistent with the hypothesis of no other causes, besides the *miracles of Christ*,<sup>1</sup> having co-operated in its success. Had these constituted the single proof of His divine mission, it would have followed that the effect must have been most apparent nearest the spot where they were worked and the time when they happened; for it would have grown gradually weaker and slower, as the circle within which the report of them was spread became wider and wider.

for few  
can have  
been eye-  
witnesses,

Of the innumerable thousands who, we have reason to believe, had embraced Christianity before the expiration of the first century, how few can be supposed to have been eye-witnesses of the miracles of its Founder! But it may be collected from the Acts that even of these, the large number were domiciled neither at Jerusalem nor in Judæa. A Christian Church would seem to have been formed at Rome some years before any of the Apostles had been there; the same in other places: and the narrative would lead us to believe that

<sup>1</sup> Equal miracles, however, attended the Apostles and numerous apostolic missionaries. The crowning miracle of Jesus Himself was the effusion, at Pentecost, of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person, after which Christ was, in a manner, indefinitely multiplied in His agents, *Christos suos*—a further and, possibly, not entirely exhausted miracle.—ED.

the persons by whom the Gospel was most eagerly received were usually thus circumstanced.

In the more abstract view of reason, perhaps, the evidence for the truth of a miracle may be as certain to those who lived a hundred years after the event as to those who were present when it was performed. Supposing we possessed some infallible document to demonstrate that it was believed by those who were upon the spot; and such as to satisfy us, that if we had been present, our own belief would have been the same as theirs—our absence may alter the impression of the evidence upon our minds, but does not in the least affect the proof. But we need hardly point out how great is the influence, we may almost call it the tyranny, exercised over the understanding by the senses and imagination. Speaking of mankind in the mass, we may safely assert, that the effect of any event, of a kind to excite wonder and astonishment, must always be more marked upon the minds of those who were eye-witnesses of it, than of those whose knowledge had been obtained only at second-hand, and after a long interval of time. If the reverse of this should appear in any instance to be the case, it would afford a strong presumption that the evidence of other circumstances, besides that of the facts themselves, must have been taken into the account; that some light, real or supposed, must have broken in upon the minds of men; some motives and reasons such as were not accessible at first, or not clearly understood, over and above those which appeared on the face of things.

Now there is no indication in the history of Christianity of any specific natural causes having intervened; nor, after the destruction of Jerusalem,

but must have been to such of more vivid nature.

But what?

do we know of any that were miraculous, to explain this phenomenon. So far as human wisdom indeed, or human power and learning and authority were concerned, the absence of such causes of success is commonly stated among the proofs of its divine original. Upon a first view this is something more than a mere difficulty ; it seems to be a paradox. For see how the case stands.

For the evidence was prepared for Jews alone, though it was the heathen that were converted in myriads.

The evidence on which this Revelation depends was prepared and calculated solely for the Jews. It was communicated only to them ; by no other people was it in the first instance at all understood. But on looking into history, contrary to all seeming probability of human nature, contrary to the very premises of the evidence itself, we find that Israel, for whom it was intended, and to whom alone it had been made known, did not receive it: while the nations to whom it had not been communicated were rapidly converted. Within the lapse of two or three generations, Polytheism in all its ancient forms was silently and without violence exterminated in Europe and in the countries adjacent to the Roman empire ; while Judaism, which seemed to have been torn up by the very roots and scattered to the winds, by a catastrophe more overwhelming than ever before or since fell upon any nation from the beginning of the world, not only survived in that age, but has continued to survive, amidst every variety of oppression and persecution, to the times we live in.

and yet, while Polytheism disappeared, Judaism remains.

We may not perhaps be allowed to adduce this extraordinary fact as a proof of the divine origin of Christianity ; but at all events it affords no presumption to the contrary.

Give the case up to the non-believer upon any terms he pleases, it can never be made to assist his side of the argument. If he adduces this incredulity of the Jews as a proof that the facts related in the Gospel did not really happen or were not believed—then, the sudden conversion of the *heathen* nations of the world becomes doubly perplexing. There will be no clue to the difficulty, in this case, except that attributed to Bayle in his article “Abdera,” in which he has been suspected of wishing his readers to infer that mankind, in the first century, were *mad*. This would be falling, I think, from Scylla into Charybdis; but it is the only alternative. I am persuaded that in the age when Christianity first appeared, it may have presented itself to many as a conceivable solution.

Surmise  
that men  
of 1st  
century  
went mad;

It will hardly be expected that we should seriously refute such an hypothesis; but if it were necessary to do so, the only course to follow would be to examine the history of this period. The documents for this purpose, which we have in our possession, being with the exception of the Acts of the Apostles not historical but controversial, contain none but very general facts; nevertheless, they will be found to afford sufficient light, to enable us to form some corresponding notion of the causes to which Christianity owed the rapidity of its success. Enough at least to refute, not only the supposed hypothesis of Bayle, but every explanation that can be offered, if based upon the ordinary principles of human belief.

good as  
any other  
merely  
*human*  
theory.

Every one is aware, that it was the progress of Christianity which rooted out Polytheism from the ancient world. And it would also seem to be com-



monly supposed, that the effect was slowly produced by the same sort of gradual process with which erroneous opinions in legislation or philosophy are eradicated from the minds of men. Now although it is true, that the religion of the heathen nations of antiquity was not overthrown, in the same way, justly, as the Jewish law and worship, by a sudden political convulsion; yet the rise of the Christian religion in the world was an event almost as distinctly marked, as the downfall of the Mosaic. For the first few years, indeed, its growth was slow, like "that of a tender plant in a dry ground," to use the expressive words of the Prophet. But as soon as it had fixed its roots in the soil, or formed a nucleus, it began to spread out its branches with a vigour and rapidity, which it is difficult fully to explain, on any supposition we can frame;—even while we assume the truth of the strange facts, out of the belief of which it arose.

The  
majority  
of converts  
were  
already  
affiliated to  
Judaism,

Although there is abundant evidence in the New Testament to show that there were many heathens among the earliest converts, yet it is plain that a large majority of the first disciples, in the days of the Apostles, must have been from the Jews; or else from that numerous class spoken of in the Acts as Gentiles, but who had so far embraced the Jewish discipline as to have joined with them, not only in renouncing Polytheism, but in worshipping the same God. If we look to the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, we shall see that the Gentiles are there mentioned as being assembled in the same synagogue with the Jews at Antioch, in a way which marks it to have been a familiar occurrence. Cornelius belonged to this class of the "God-fearing," as they were termed, as well as Timothy and Titus; also the eunuch men-

tioned in the eighth of the Acts; to whom may be added the centurion spoken of by St. Luke, as loving the Jewish nation, and having built them a synagogue.

But it is not necessary to dwell upon the proof of this. Any one who takes the trouble of examining the New Testament, and especially the historical parts of it, with a careful eye, will readily see, that under the various names of Worshippers or Devout Persons or Greeks or Strangers or Gentiles this class of persons,—by whatever denomination they ought to be distinguished, whether as proselytes of the gate or by any other title,—must have been very numerous even in Jerusalem and Judæa; and in other parts of the world, there is reason to believe that they formed a still larger multitude. Not being circumcised nor under an engagement to observe any part of the ceremonial law, it is probable that they were not looked upon as Jews proper either by the heathens or by themselves. What proportion the number of such converts may have borne to the rest of the disciples is not a matter of any importance. That the number was large, is plainly indicated in the Acts and Epistles.

For all the purposes, however, of our present inquiry, these persons, it is plain, may be numbered as Jews; because they were able to understand and to appreciate all the evidence, afforded by the prophecies in favour of Christianity at least, as well as if they had been of the stock of Abraham. For, so far as they may be supposed to have been exempt from many of the prejudices and unfounded pretensions inherent in those who were of the circumcision, it is not to be doubted but that their minds must have been more open to receive the truths of the Gospel than if

who were practically Jews, yet without Hebrew prejudices.

they had been Jews by the privilege of their birth. The breaking down of the wall between these last and themselves, which was the great offence of the Gospel in the eyes of the Hebrew nation, must have been no offence, but just the reverse, in their eyes. It was an interpretation of prophecy much more likely to obtain their favourable regard than the arrogant, as well as improbable, belief which the Jews clung to with such blind affection.

First converts from affiliated Gentiles.

Be the weight of these remarks, however, what it may, it is clear from the New Testament that it was within the circle formed by these two classes of persons—namely, of Jews properly so called, and of the Gentile worshippers as here described—that the great body of the early converts was almost exclusively found; and that this continued to be the case, up to the period to which the narrative of events in the New Testament extends. A very slight consideration of the arguments put forward by St. Paul in his Epistles will show that he was uniformly writing to persons who not only believed, but understood the Jewish Scriptures. The period I am now speaking of reaches to the year 65, or perhaps a little later; but it ended before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Pliny's account.

From this time, for a space of about thirty-five or forty years, we hear no more of Christianity or of the Christians from any cotemporary authority. It is evident from Tacitus and Suetonius, that their opinions had widely spread, and had attracted the notice and excited the fears of the government; but, except the persecutions in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, we learn no specific fact. About the year 106 or 107 comes the letter from Pliny the younger to

Trajan. At the time when this was written it would seem to be plain that the Christians must have become a large and increasing multitude of persons. And as there is no reason whatever for supposing that they had spread more numerous in Bithynia than elsewhere, we may safely infer, from this document, that their doctrines had now reached the remotest parts of the Roman empire. In this most essential document, Pliny informs the emperor that the sect in that province included persons of all ages and conditions:—that the contagion had seized not only the cities, but the villages and open country; adding, that there had been, for a long time, an intermission of all the heathen solemnities; and that the sacrifices to the gods had almost ceased. “*Multi enim omnis ætatis, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. Neque enim civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam et agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est. Quæ videtur sisti et corrigi posse. Certe satis constat, prope etiam desolata templa cæpisse celebrari, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti; passimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur.*” In consequence of the strong measures adopted by Pliny, a better state of things was beginning, he says, to arise; but one, still surrounded with so many difficulties, that he writes to the emperor for advice.

From the last-mentioned particulars, it is plain that the majority of the converts, here described, must have been heathen. In the absence of all counter testimony, we are entitled to take Pliny’s account of the deserted condition, to which the religion of the state had been brought in Bithynia, as a measure of the success which had attended Christianity in the

other provinces of the empire, at this early date. In this view, the rapidity of its progress, as above described, however we may attempt to explain the case, is truly astonishing; but, taken in connection with those parts of the prophecies, in which the very state of things which Pliny relates, would seem to have been predicted, the fact, to those who were informed of those prophecies, may well have seemed miraculous.

That this opinion had thus early begun to pervade the public mind, may, I think, be safely inferred from a reference to the writings of the Fathers. They do not argue and discuss whether the prophecies had been fulfilled or not; but they assume that point. It matters not which of them we take up—we shall find, from Justin downwards, to Augustine, and emphatically from the latter, that the rapid success of Christianity in the world is the crowning proof of its divine origin, in the view taken of the evidences, by every one of them.

The  
Fathers  
explain  
this  
progress  
by pro-  
phesies of  
Old Testa-  
ment.

I have before had occasion to mention, generally, that it was the Old Testament upon which converts then rested their cause. But if we take up Justin, or Origen, or Tertullian, we shall not be long in observing, that among the prophecies, those to which these early writers chiefly appeal, are the prophecies of Isaiah, in which he speaks of the impending discomfiture of idolatry in the world, and the approach of a kingdom under which all mankind would be brought to a knowledge of the one supreme God. The manner in which they dwelt upon this argument shows that in their opinion *this* part of the prophecies had been incontrovertibly fulfilled. The fact itself, as I just now observed, they appeal to, as being notorious; and urge



it as a conclusive proof that the original evidence, from which the belief in Christ's Divine authority had risen, must have been true.

I am here merely stating, however, *what* their reasoning was, and on what *data* it was built. There may be a difference of opinion about their inferences ; but there is no room for disputing the assertion, that even so early as the reign of Trajan, Christianity was in effect established. I do not mean that it was established by law, or recognized by the State ; but it had taken its place for good in the world ; the ensigns of its coming greatness were fairly upraised in the sight of mankind. Already it had become a visible society, and that not confined to one spot, or city, or country, or language ; but diffused, in a greater or less proportion, through almost every nation upon earth.

Accordingly, if we turn to the writings of Justin, So Justin. who wrote about thirty years after the date of Pliny's letter, and lived in the generation which immediately succeeded that of the Apostles, we shall find that the conclusions I have drawn from this last document, as to the rapid diffusion of Christianity, are fully borne out by his testimony. "There is no race of mankind," says he to Trypho the Jew,<sup>1</sup> "whether of Greeks or Barbarians, or of any other appellation, whether of those who wander in tribes, without fixed habitation, or tend their flocks in tents (ἡ ἀμαξοβίων, ἡ αὐοίκων καλουμένων, ἡ ἐν σκηναῖς κτηνοτρόφων οἰκούντων), among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered up to the Creator of the universe, in the name of the crucified Jesus ;"—a statement which he prefaces with an assertion that, at the time when he

<sup>1</sup> Sect. 117.

was writing, the Gospel was spread over a wider space than even the religion of the Jews.

Irenæus.

The next Christian writer of whom we have any considerable remains, is Irenæus. He was settled in Gaul, and wrote some twenty or thirty years later still. Speaking of the unity of the Catholic faith, which "the Church," he says, "though disseminated throughout the world, diligently preserves;" he goes on to remark, that "although there are in the world various languages, yet the authority or traditional faith is one and the same everywhere. And neither do the Churches which are founded in Germany believe differently or teach differently; nor those which are in Spain, or in Gaul, or in the East, or in Egypt, or in Africa, nor those which are in the more inland parts of the world."<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian.

Cotemporary with Irenæus, and writing very few years later, is Tertullian. In his book against the Jews, reminding them of the various prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the conversion of the Gentiles:—"This prediction," says he,<sup>2</sup> "you now see fulfilled in the successful preaching of the Gospel: *'its sound has gone out into all lands, and its voice unto the ends of the world:'* for in whom else have all the Nations believed, except in Christ, who has now come? In Him have the Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Rome, and Jews of Jerusalem, been brought to believe; in Him, the barbarous tribes of Africa, and the dispersed clans of Spain, and Gaul, and Britain;—places inaccessible to the Romans, among the Sarmatians, and Dacians, and Germans, and Scythians, provinces and islands of which we know not the names, and which

<sup>1</sup> "Lib. i." c. 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Adv. Jud." c. 7.

we are unable to enumerate,—have been subdued by Christ.”

And bear in mind that this and similar passages do not occur in a writing intended for Christians ; —who, perhaps, would not be likely to question a statement which was favourable to their cause ;—but for Jews, upon whom mere declamation of this kind, if not founded on facts that were notorious, would be worse than thrown away. “All other kingdoms,” he goes on to say, “as of Pharaoh, of Alexander, of the Assyrians, or even the empire of the Romans, are limited and defined ; but the kingdom of Christ, and His name, reaches everywhere, is believed everywhere, reigns everywhere, and is adored everywhere. He is King, and Judge, and God, and Lord, to all. —*Christi regnum et nomen ubique porrigitar: ubique creditur, ubique regnat, ubique adoratur, — omnibus Rex, omnibus Judex, omnibus Deus et Dominus est.*” “We are only of yesterday,” he writes in another place,<sup>1</sup> “and already,” he tells the Gentiles, to whom his Apology is addressed, “we have filled every place which belongs to you ; your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your municipal places of assembly, even your camps and palaces, your senate and forum ;—the temples of your gods alone are left to you. It is your own accusation,” he tells them, —*obsessam vociferantur civitatem, in agris, in castellis, in insulis Christianos.* “All sexes, and ages, and conditions, even among the highest ranks, as they themselves,” he writes, “are heard to complain, have enrolled themselves under this name :” *omnem sexum, ætatem, conditionem, etiam dignitatem trans gredi ad hoc nomen, mærent.*

<sup>1</sup> “Apol.” c. 37.

Origen.

Exactly to the same effect is the language of Origen, who, writing a few years later than Tertullian, asserts that the Gospel had, in his day, subdued the whole of Greece, and the greater part of the rest of the world, *πάσης μὲν Ἑλλάδος, ἐπὶ πλεῖον δὲ βαρβάρων ἐκράτησε*. There are two other very strong and pointed passages from the same writer, quoted by Paley in his chapter on the Propagation of the Gospel, to which I would refer the reader, as also a passage from Clemens Alexandrinus, who was the cotemporary of Tertullian, in which he says, that “the philosophers were only found in Greece, but the doctrine of Christ is spread throughout the world, in every nation, and village, and city, both of Greeks and Barbarians.”<sup>1</sup> It is needless to adduce the testimony of later writers; but it may be worth remarking, that, in the book “*De Morte Persecutorum*,” commonly attributed to Lactantius, and which is in the list of his works, it is stated, that so early as the time of Nero, the Gospel had spread to the remotest corners of the earth: “*ut jam nullus esset terrarum angulus tam remotus, quo non religio Dei penetrasset.*”

So that their numbers were incalculable, and the evidence of prophecies, as an argument, completed.

It appears then, from these extracts, allowing even for declamation, that even before the generation, in which Christ was born, had passed away, His religion had taken root, and was firmly, here and there, established throughout the empire. In the next generation, neither the number of Christians, nor the extent to which their religion was diffused, could any longer be estimated;—and the prophecies of the Old Testament may be thenceforth considered, for all the purposes of argument, as having been completed.

<sup>1</sup> “Strom.” vi.

What, then, were the causes of this rapid and extraordinary success? Were they human or divine, natural or providential, primary or secondary?—This is the great and interesting question which I shall now proceed to examine.



## CHAPTER V.

### PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE HEATHEN FURTHER CONSIDERED.

Causes of the rapid spread of Christianity in the first centuries not a question affecting the evidence of its truth—Secondary causes not denied—Views of Gibbon—Slow progress of *modern* missions considered—Opinions of the early Fathers—Rapid conversion of the heathen in the first ages hypothetically explained.

Gospel  
miraculous  
only in its  
start ; but  
what of its  
progress ?

THE investigation of the causes of the vast phenomenon proposed at the end of the preceding chapter is a point in which the Christian, as such, has no distinct concern. Whether Christianity be accepted or not, the causes of its rapid propagation in the world, with any superior mind, are indeed most deserving of inquiry. But a person who believes his Bible may, if he pleases, decline to interest himself about the means employed by God for its propagation in the world, provided he can be sure, or believes himself to be sure, that it was planted really by His hand. If even it could be shown that God, in this supernatural purpose, had employed none but natural means for diffusing the knowledge of it among mankind, there would be no reason why the Christian should not acquiesce in such an explanation. Christianity pretends to have been miraculous in its *origin*, but to nothing more. Its rapid rise and present position in the world are con-

formable with such pretensions. If no adequate causes can be assigned for its rapid progress, during the first and second centuries, without supposing a continuous manifestation of a Divine interposition, that will create a difficulty over and above that presented by the marvels found in the Bible, which a person who should affirm its origin also to have been merely human will have to overcome. But the overcoming this difficulty by the critic, or his not overcoming it, will not in the least affect the evidence on which the belief of the Christian born is built. To the believer this is no more than an historical inquiry, a mere matter of curiosity for learned leisure. The philosophical question will indeed remain in its proper gravity; but this last investigation does not touch any foundations on which the proof of Christianity rests. As the subject, however, is of serious interest, if only in this last point of view, and as it very materially affects the adverse side of the argument, it is, even on theological grounds, well deserving of consideration.

Let it then be well observed that it is not the co-  
 operation of certain secondary or secular causes for  
 the unexampled propaganda, but only their sufficiency  
 of these to such effect, that is here denied. Whatever  
 opinion we may entertain as to the causes of the  
 sudden diffusion of Christianity through the world  
 after the destruction of Jerusalem, it would, of course,  
 be absurd to question the intervention of natural  
 causes: on the contrary, a notable co-operation of  
 such must be assumed. To reject this supposition  
 would weaken rather than confirm the proof of its  
 divine origin; inasmuch, as the *joint* operation of the  
 preternatural with nature would imply, that the

Which was  
 providen-  
 tial rather  
 than mira-  
 culous.

Author of the Christian revelation was, at the same time, the Supreme Governor of the world. If then this benign yet exacting religion was from both the Love and Wisdom of God, it must have been probable, even from the beginning, that it would be communicated to mankind at a time when perforce circumstances would be favourable to its reception by the greatest number of those for whose benefit the great sacrifice was conceived. Origen, and after him Eusebius, goes still further, and says, "*that a favourable state of things had been purposely prepared beforehand, by the Divine Providence.*" To this cause he ascribes "*the profound peace in which the world was found, at the time when Christ appeared, and the subjection of so many nations under one empire. Had mankind at that time been placed under the government of many and hostile rulers, it would have been difficult,*" says he, "*for the Apostles to have executed the command which bade them to 'go and teach all the nations.'*" He afterwards proceeds to show this, by exemplifying the impediments they would have met with, had they been compelled to preach during the *Triumvirate*, or at almost any period of the world before that in which they received their commission.

Clemens.

On a similar principle of reasoning, Clemens of Alexandria ascribes the Grecian philosophy to God. "*In the same manner,*" says he, "*as the Old Testament was a preparation, or προπαιδεία, for the Jews; so also were the writings of Socrates and Plato, and their followers, for the Gentiles.*" I shall not stop to discuss this opinion of his, which would require many qualifications before it could be safely received. My reason for adverting to it is merely to show that the early Christians, who certainly did not ascribe the

*origin* of the Gospel to secondary causes, thought that the supposition of their *co-operation* in its after success was quite consistent with a belief in its Divine authority. The question, therefore, is not whether secondary causes should be excluded from our hypothesis, when endeavouring to account for the rapid propagation of Christianity in the world ; but whether its success can be accounted for on the supposition of secondary causes principally or alone ?

As, then, the existence of Christianity in the world is a matter of fact not to be gainsaid, I take for granted, as a thing of course, that those who assert its human origin must suppose that none but human means had any part, direct or indirect, in its propagation ;—or if causes, over which human agents can exercise no control, contributed to its success, that this effect was purely accidental. Such causes we must assume not to have been foreseen, or divinely prepared beforehand ; for if they were, in that case, although the effect itself may have followed in the natural sequence of events, yet would this have been nevertheless a miraculous one, for all the purposes of the present inquiry. It is this last which I consider as the true way of explaining the fact. But before adducing my reasons for so thinking, it will be proper to inquire first, whether any other hypothesis to account for it, simply and *exclusively* by means of natural causes, has ever been proposed ; and if so, what those causes are stated to have been.

Human means employed for this, but by Divine disposition.

It would, perhaps, be going far to say in unqualified terms, that no one is at liberty to doubt the Divine origin of Christianity, except he is prepared to assign, on other principles, the causes of its success. Nevertheless, it is certainly a presumptive argument in

For its *origin*, no cause but Divine has ever been shown.

favour of its Divine origin, that no other specific explanation has ever yet been produced. I have made this assertion broadly, but I think not too broadly; because, although the causes which Gibbon has assigned,<sup>1</sup> to account for the rapid propagation of the Gospel in the second and third centuries, may seem to afford an exception to my remark, yet they are not so really; inasmuch as if we overlook the spirit in which his statements are made, there is not in any one of them a single fact, not even a single conjecture, at which the most devout believer need take alarm.

Gibbon  
mistook  
mere  
effects for  
causes ;

The causes, indeed, which Gibbon suggests, are all of them—as stated, at least, by him—secondary causes only. But, then, it is to be observed, he does not attempt to explain the first plant or *rise* of Christianity in the world, but only to account for a vast progress which, as being a critic, but also somewhat more, was matter of astonishment to his mind. But so far are the causes which he assigns from excluding the supposition of originally miraculous source, that the obtrusive fact of the general belief of such source on the part of mankind was that which put him in search of an hypothesis; it is, indeed, a fact that must be assumed, in order to explain his explanation. In short, the very causes which he suggests, instead of accounting for the *rise* of this belief, are but among the novel *effects* which had flowed from it, and call, themselves, for miraculous or extraordinary explanation.

for such  
only are  
assigned  
by him for  
causes.

This will, I think, be evident at a glance. They are : 1. The zeal of the early Christians. 2. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul; together with

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xv.



their belief in the millennium and a future judgment. 3. The pretension to miraculous<sup>1</sup> gifts. 4. The pure morals of the first Christians. 5. Their Church discipline.

Now, the readers of Gibbon may well agree with him in thinking that all these contributed as causes to the success of Christianity; and it is probable that others of a similar kind might easily be named which did conspire, in various degrees, to recommend the revelation and worship of Christ to the favourable reception of mankind. If the early Christians had been without zeal; if the doctrines which they preached had been subversive of morality; if their lives had been impure; if they had been under no rules of government; if they had disclaimed any belief in miracles:—the success of Christianity in the world, upon such a supposition, would have been something indeed astonishing! But surely no one was ever so wild as to think that, because in the case of the Gospel the contrary of this in every instance was the admitted fact, it was therefore *not* from God. As a general argument such an opinion would be too idle to deserve a serious refutation. And if we examine severally the particular propositions on which Gibbon based his rejection of the Divine authority of this revelation (for such it is to be presumed was his meaning in the celebrated chapter to which I am now referring), they will not be found much more worthy of attention.

And first, for the inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians, and the advantage which they derived,

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon should have been reported as having said, "The miraculous gifts generally attributed to them." But, then, what was it that had made men attribute to them these improbable endowments?—ED.

from the mild and tolerant genius of Polytheism.<sup>1</sup> When Gibbon penned this sentence, he must surely have forgotten the persecutions of Claudius, and Nero, and Diocletian; as also the letter from Pliny, which was alluded to in the last chapter, and for which he elsewhere endeavours to apologize. But admitting his statement to be correct;—to say that the reason of the success of the first disciples was their having been allowed to preach their doctrines; this—though the fact had been ever so true—would afford no argument to show that the doctrines which they taught were not the word of God. As to the inflexible and intolerant zeal which he ascribes to them, this was surely but a natural consequence of their firm conviction of the Divine authority of their faith; and if it operated favourably upon the opinions of mankind, it can only have been, because it was regarded as a clear proof, at least, of sincerity on the part of the early Christians.

Doctrines  
of immor-  
tality and  
of millen-  
nium.

The next cause is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of the future state of rewards and punishments; “improved,” as he says it was, “by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth.” Now this truth, no doubt, is part and parcel of the Gospel teaching; but it was also part and parcel of the doctrine of Socrates and Plato. The question, therefore, is, how did it happen that a truth which all the wisdom of Socrates, and all the eloquence of Plato, had failed to demonstrate to the satisfaction of mankind, was received by them so much more favourably,

<sup>1</sup> Polytheism, however, became *fierce* enough the moment it felt itself really touched—when scorn gave way to fear—a rage which only culminated when it recovered the civil sword under a fanatical but docile young imperial pupil.—ED.

on the simple authority of a few poor fishermen and mechanics? This was the true point of Gibbon's argument; but it is just this that is passed over by him in silence.

The third cause is, the assertion among the first Christians of miraculous gifts. But supposing the miracles ascribed to Christ to have been really wrought, and that the power of working them was extended to the Apostles also,—surely it need not make much impression upon the mind of any man, who knows what human nature is, to be told that pretenders to such powers, as with Peregrinus and others, continued to infest the Church long after all normal grant of these to the Church, as such, had been withdrawn. Such an effect was a natural consequence of the universal belief in such miracles as those related of Christ and His Apostles. All it could prove is, that the minds of men were excited; and, as has happened in other cases, that designing men might take advantage of the fact: “*Prodigia eo anno malta nunciata sunt*,” says Livy, speaking of the second Punic war, “*quæ quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo etiam plura nuntiabantur*.” I can only say, as for myself, that I am not inclined to believe in the continuance of miraculous powers with the Church, since the great and closing miracle exhibited in the destruction of Jerusalem. Assertions there are, in allegation of miraculous effects, more than enough; but it is observable, that the early writers do not speak of such endowments, as possessed by themselves—however credulous they may seem in the instance of others. It might be questioned, whether there is any specific miracle upon record, from the time when Jerusalem was destroyed to the present, for

Mere pretensions to miracles no effectual aid,

which such evidence could be produced as would now be satisfactory in the proof of any ordinary fact. A too facile admission of such marvels, though naturally to be accounted for, was rather the reproach than an aid to the early Church ; and instead of reckoning this belief, as Gibbon does, among the causes of the success of Christianity, my own persuasion is that it was rather among the impediments which it had to overcome.

for such  
then com-  
mon, but  
ascribed to  
dæmonic  
agency.

In the early ages of the Church, at any rate, such miracles as we read of in ecclesiastical writers would scarcely, even if they had been true, have much advanced the cause of Christianity ; since there were none, either in or out of the Church, who reasoned upon this evidence, as we now do. Mankind in those days were rather disposed to regard them as the effects of forbidden arts, or otherwise of spiritual agency, good or bad ; and we can hardly doubt that learned men, instead of being attracted by such arguments, would be rather kept away.

The purity  
of Chris-  
tian  
morals.

The fourth and fifth causes assigned by Gibbon are “the pure and austere morals of the early Christians,” and “the union which prevailed among them ; together with the discipline established in their Churches.” These may be reckoned among the causes of the success of Christianity, no doubt ; but it is only in the same sense in which the character of Christ Himself might be so reckoned, or the wisdom which He displayed, or the pure morality which He enjoined ; and in this view, the very truth itself of the Gospel may also be so considered. But then comes the difficulty : —if zeal in the cause of Christ, if virtue and pure morality among His followers, and other qualifications of that kind, be sufficient to account for the rapid progress made by His religion, at the time when it

was first preached—why, when these same qualities are exhibited among the heathen, do not the same effects follow in the present day? I need not say that we find no answer to this question in the pages of Gibbon. And yet this is the point upon which the whole inquiry turns; it exactly enunciates the problem which Gibbon<sup>1</sup> passes over, but which, if the subject was to be inquired into, he was required to solve.

The difficulties which all recent missionaries have encountered in prosecuting their evangelical labours among the more barbarous nations of the world, are well known; and their want of success has often been the subject of surprise as well as of regret. The doctrines which they preach are the same as in the time of Justin or Tertullian: there are the same promises, the same threatenings, the same precepts, the same rites, the same Church discipline. And if the simple claim of miracles be sufficient, even this has not been wanting—on the part, at least, of one large class of modern missionaries. On the other hand, if it were credulity, and superstition, and ignorance, that facilitated the success of the Gospel, at its first appearance—these are permanent causes; and where they exist would, in given circumstances, show forth the same effects at all times. In all the points, therefore, where a difference is to be traced, the balance would seem rather to be in favour of the present age of the world. The authority of power, and of learning, and of wealth, and of all extraneous influences, including an experience of the beneficial tendency of Christianity;—all

Why, then,  
have mis-  
sions so  
little suc-  
cess now?

<sup>1</sup> The historian has, however, neglected necessarily a sixth cause; and an apologist is himself debarred from alleging, with the simple recusant, a factor scarcely producible *in invito*—"charitas diffusa in cordibus per Spiritum Sanctum"—however vast the *subjective* efficacy as recognized within the "household."—ED.



these elements of success have now changed sides, and are ranged in support of those doctrines to which they were originally opposed.

Some  
other  
cause, then,  
there must  
have been  
at bottom?

Looking, then, to the comparative results, it is plain, upon the very face of the case, that some cause or causes must have been at work, during the period to which the remarks of Gibbon refer, which are not in operation now; nor ever have been, so far as we can judge, except at that particular epoch when the Gospel was first preached. The question is not whether those causes were miraculous or not miraculous; nor whether mankind were induced to embrace Christianity upon good or bad reasons; but simply *what* the causes or reasons were by which an effect so surprising in itself, and so important in its consequences, was in so short a space of time accomplished.

Apostles  
and  
Fathers as-  
sign the  
Old Testa-  
ment pro-  
phesies.

Now, if we are willing to abide by the testimony of those who were witnesses of the effect, the answer is ready at hand. The authors of the New Testament rest their proofs, as was before shown, almost exclusively upon the evidence of certain supposed prophecies. The early Fathers of the Church, with one voice, ascribe their own conversion to this same argument. Whether they are relating the grounds of their own belief, or pressing their opinions upon the minds of others, the testimony to which they appeal, in proof of the Divine authority of what they teach, is always the Old Testament. I have before had occasion to remark what I am here stating, and I must refer to the quotations which I then produced. Whether the Fathers reasoned rightly or not, I am *now* merely asserting an historical fact which is noticed by Gibbon himself, and which no one who is conversant with the writings in question will be likely to dispute.

But supposing we assume this fact of their appeal as one which has before been proved : yet it does not follow by necessary consequence that it will explain the great phenomena. If we suppose the Old Testament to have been written under Divine inspiration, or, which, for all the purposes of the present argument, will come to the same thing—that such an opinion was commonly entertained at the time when Christianity was first established in the world,—this would be sufficient, it may perhaps be thought, to account for the conversion of individuals. It would indeed explain why Justin himself became a Christian, or why the inhabitants of some particular city or country, to whom the knowledge of the Old Testament had been already communicated, should have embraced the Gospel. But still it would seem quite inadequate to account for its early and simultaneous propagations among so many nations, to whom the name of a promised Messiah should have been quite unknown. Those parts of the world, it may be said, stood in the same relation to the Apostles, and first teachers of Christianity, as the people of India and China stand in, at this time, to those who now attempt their conversion :—why, then, is it, that the self-same prophecies, which were so powerful among the heathen, in the first and second centuries, produce comparatively no result worth mentioning in the present day ?

This would hold good with Jews, who knew them ;

The answer to this question is not to be obtained from history, because we have but few documents for our guidance belonging to this period ; and those which we possess touch but slightly upon the facts of the case. But if we keep our eye only upon the speculative difficulty which the question involves, the difference in

but the heathen had not these in hand.

the results here pointed out will easily be explained, hypothetically, by the change which *time* has now made in the circumstances of the case.

The objection now under consideration relates only to the heathen nations of the world whom we suppose to have been ignorant of the Old Testament. Had the revelation of Christianity been confined to the people of Jerusalem or Judea, the objection assumes that their conversion would have come within the asserted explanation. These last all knew beforehand the existence of the several prophecies. They were looking forward to the fulfilment of them: and at the time when Christ appeared, were actually expecting the arrival of a Divine messenger. But the other nations of the world are by Gibbon assumed to have been unprepared for any such event, though if they, also, had known of these prophecies, and had been in a state of similar suspense, the same explanation would apply equally to both. It is then upon the supposed antecedent expectation in the one case, and the supposed antecedent ignorance in the other, that the difference between the two, in relation to the present question, plainly turns; and not upon any points of circumstantial belief.

How, then,  
were these  
prepared?

If, then, we may, for the sake of argument, assume the existence of this antecedent knowledge on the part of the Gentile nations, at and before the time of Christ's appearing—we shall be in possession of an hypothesis which, if true, would account for the ready reception which Christianity met with, in the ancient heathen world. And as it is quite certain that the whole heathen world, in the present day, is without this preparation, the obstacles which the Gospel now encounters in the hands of modern missionaries need cause no

difficulty. But this will be better seen by the help of an example.

To take, then, the case just now adverted to, of China and Hindostan ; or of any other countries, the inhabitants of which, like the heathen of old, are a refined and civilized people, on points not relating to religion. It is, I think, quite plain, that upon their minds the argument from prophecy, as it now stands in the West, must be, for every practical purpose, altogether without effect with such. The premises on which the reasoning depends are no longer facts now falling under the notice of mankind, but matters of remote historical proof. Who was Moses, and Isaiah, and Daniel ? When did they write ? What is the evidence for the authenticity of the books in which their predictions are recorded ? and in what way can it be demonstrated that those predictions came to pass ?—These, and many like points, are all presupposed as notorious in the proof of the argument from prophecy. Without this, the topic of prophecy possesses no urgency of force whatever ; but even with it, we can explain the conclusion to man's understanding only, often without awakening any lively and active belief. It may be easy to demonstrate the proofs of the Deluge as an historical truth, but very difficult to represent to our own minds, or, still less, to convey to the minds of others, an impression of what those who once witnessed it must have experienced. Just so it is with the argument drawn from present fulfilment of known predictions : the vivid force of the effect once produced by such upon those whose minds were already in the state for which its use was primarily prepared, cannot be measured by the mere degree of logical or abstract weight due to the evidence of prediction, as

They are  
seen to  
take little  
effect when  
now pro-  
posed to  
heathen.

producible and apprehensible by persons living in the present altered times. It is the *preceding expectation* which gives this evidence its peculiar vivid and motive interest. But where the *data* are to be learnedly explained and demonstrated, the argument becomes a dry theorem, of little or no value in a matter of practical belief; for, to obtain a hearing, the imagination of mankind must be appealed to, as well as their understanding. Or, if any considerable result is to be obtained by this means, it can only be in individual instances, or by personal influence. No collective impression can be produced in this way upon the opinions of any large masses of mankind, such as were both the object and needed basis even for the Gospel.

For remote facts do not interest the imagination.

It may safely be asserted, even of the wisest, that speculative truths do not much influence the conduct; for it is not upon them that men build their hopes and fears, or regulate their feelings. In all that concerns the active belief of mankind, at least as much depends upon the circumstances under which the truth is presented to their imagination and feelings, as upon the abstract weight of the proofs adduced in its support. This is true as a general remark; but I think it especially so in the particular case immediately under our present consideration. And to be convinced of this, we have only to take the same instance as before, and view the case of the Chinese or Hindoos under the different suppositions of their actual circumstances and that of an antecedent preparation.

Thus, had rise of British power been presig-

Suppose, then, that in the Vedas and other sacred writings of the Brahmins and Buddhists, which are spread all over the East, and about the antiquity of which there can be no more doubt than about that



of the Jewish Scriptures, there were found a number of distinct and clearly understood predictions, in which the rise of the British dominion of India had been plainly foretold. Suppose, further, that in the same books in which this prediction was contained, others also were to be found, intimating that after a given epoch—the exact period of which was precisely defined—the present idolatrous worship, now prevailing in those parts of the world, would be brought to an end; and its votaries be led, of their own free choice, to embrace the religion of their conquerors. As the signal of this great revolution, imagine it to have been predicted that the temple of Juggernaut should suddenly, and in some miraculous manner, be overturned and utterly destroyed, and the whole race of Brahmins be violently driven from their country, and dispersed among the surrounding nations. To these, let other circumstances be added, if necessary, so as to remove all ambiguity as to the sense of the prophecies before they were fulfilled, and all doubt as to their divine authority afterwards. We have only to suppose further, that the knowledge of the predictions was spread throughout all the surrounding countries;—that there was hardly a city of any note in which they were not talked of and discussed by individuals, and more or less believed;—and we shall have a case nearly parallel to what would have been the position of the heathen nations of antiquity, if they had been prepared by a previous knowledge of the prophecies contained in the Old Testament.

Now imagine the “times” to have been calculated by all the more learned of the Hindoos; and the present to be the generation in which both they and the people of the East were looking for their fulfil-

filled in  
Vedas,

great  
would  
have been  
the effect  
on mind,  
when the

signal was  
given.

ment. If, then, at the moment when they were reasoning, and disputing, and wondering about the event ;—the foreshown signal should be given, and the doubts of some, and the expectation of others, and the hopes or fears of all, be suddenly realized ;—the question is, how would this hypothesis affect the argument, as between the worshippers of Christ and those of Vishnu ? Would our subjects in the East still turn a deaf ear to their conquerors, when we spoke to them of the religion of the Gospel ? or would the other nations of the earth, who symbolized with them in the essentials of their various superstitions, continue to be as inaccessible to all argument and persuasion, as they have hitherto been found ? Every one must judge the question for himself ; but to my mind it does not seem to admit of controversy. A man may say, indeed, that he would not believe the Gospel, even if presented under such circumstances to his acceptance. No doubt many so thought at the time when it was first preached. But that is not the point in question. We are not now considering in what way a particular individual might conclude ;—but only what would be the way, upon the common principles of human nature, in which the world in general would reason under the circumstances here supposed ? If we confine the question to what would be the probable effect upon the propagation of Christianity, the answer, I think, cannot be doubted.

Gospel  
came to  
nations  
under  
analogous  
conditions,

In the statement of the case here proposed, it will be seen that the hypothesis has not been overcharged. The circumstances under which Christ appeared were very similar to those which I have supposed ; and the miraculousness of the signs by which the overthrow of the Jewish ritual, as well as that of the heathen

nations, was announced, even more extraordinary. For this world-renowned temple of Jerusalem was a far more conspicuous object, in the eyes of mankind, than is the temple of Juggernaut in the eyes of the Eastern nations. The violent overthrow of the whole Jewish polity, and the total dispersion of nearly all the inhabitants of Judæa, was in every respect a far more remarkable fact than the banishment of the Brahmins would be ;—so also must the death, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus have made a much deeper impression upon men's minds, when there were thousands of persons yet alive, whose fathers had witnessed these events, than they can now be supposed to make, when simply asserted as historical truths.

It is further evident that in the contingency which I have here been supposing, the effect, whatever it was, would not be slow and gradual, but rapid, and sudden, and simultaneous ; this is part of the hypothesis. A persuasion, derived from such visible fulfilment of recognized prophecy, would propagate itself in a very different manner, from one deduced by reasoning. It would not spread from individual to individual, one by one, but would rise up at once, like a flame, in every place to which a knowledge of the prophecy had extended.

and the  
effect  
was both  
rapid and  
ubiqui-  
tous.

Now, the sudden and unexplained appearance of Christianity at one and the same time, in places the most distant from each other, both within and without the limits of the Roman empire, is the particular point which every writer, who has alluded to the fact at all, especially dwells upon. Justin, and Irenæus, and Tertullian, and Clemens, and Origen, all concur in this observation. They do not so much dwell on the mere multitude of the Christians:—that which

appears chiefly to have affected their imagination was their sudden and wonderful diffusion through so many countries ; and that, not only in the principal cities, but, as they all affirm, even in the fields and villages. "There is no race of mankind, whether wandering in tribes or feeding their flocks in tents," says Justin, "among whom prayers and thanksgiving are not offered to the Creator of the world, in the name of the crucified Jesus." "*In agris, in castellis, in insulis, Christianos ; ubique porrigitur, ubique creditur, ubique regnat,*" says Tertullian. "The doctrine of Christ," says Clemens, "is spread throughout the world, in every nation, village, and city, both of Greeks and Barbarians."

But suppose not the books, indeed, but the rumour of change, diffused through Roman empire ?

If, then, we were at liberty to assume the fact, that a knowledge of the Jewish prophecies had been actually spread abroad, among the nations of the known world, at the time when Christ was born, in the same manner as was just now supposed, in the case above imagined, the phenomenon here spoken of would be explained. Proceed we then to examine whether there is any authority in history for believing such a supposition to be true. Some cause or causes, appealing not only to the understanding of mankind, but strongly affecting their imagination, must necessarily have been in operation :—the question is, was this a recognized fulfilment of foreknown prophecies ?

## CHAPTER VI.

### PREPARATION OF PROPHECY AMONG THE HEATHEN.

State of expectation among the heathen nations—Cicero—Suetonius—Virgil—Origin of the expectation—Subject of the prophecies of Daniel and Isaiah—Object of these prophecies—Their wide diffusion.

At the beginning of Bishop Chandler's "Defence of This Christianity, from the prophecies of the Old Testament," is a dissertation on the expectation generally prevailing, in the age when Jesus Christ appeared, of some great change in human affairs, or of some extraordinary person then about to arise, to whom the future dominion of the world would be committed. I know not that anything need be added, nor that anything material can be added, to the proofs which the Bishop has brought together in confirmation of this proposition. Nevertheless, having already had occasion more than once to allude to the fact itself, I shall now adduce some of the authorities by which the statement may be directly defended. Though they are strong, yet the indirect argument to be drawn from the history of the Jewish nation at this period, as will afterwards be shown, is still stronger.

The earliest allusion which we find to the fact here supposed, is in Cicero;<sup>1</sup> who relates, that, on occasion

This  
rumour  
shown to  
be a fact

from  
Cicero,

<sup>1</sup> "De Div.," ii. c. 54.



of the Parthian war, a motion had been made in the Senate, to confer the title of king upon Cæsar, in deference to a prophecy which was produced (and which is mentioned also by Suetonius),<sup>1</sup> that the Parthians could be overcome only by a king; and that the safety of Rome must be sought under that form of government. This prophecy must have attracted considerable attention at the time; for the belief in it is said by Sallust to have been among the motives of Lentulus for lending himself to Catiline's conspiracy. So firmly indeed was this persuasion rooted in the minds of men, that Suetonius<sup>2</sup> states, on the authority of an early historian, whose name he gives, that the Senate about this time had resolved that every child born in a stated year (the same as that in which Augustus was born), should be put to death; the assigned cause being an ancient prophecy, "that nature was then in labour to bring forth a king, who should reign over the Roman people;" and the reason is given by the historian, why this decree did not pass into a law. Whether such a decree was ever really projected or not, is a point of no importance. The historian whose words Suetonius quotes, and the credit given to the fact itself by the latter, must be received as a sufficient proof, that an expectation prevailed among the people of Rome, of the appearance of some miraculous person, who was not to come into the world as other men, nor to be a mere ordinary ruler.

This last conclusion is implied in the words by which Suetonius describes his generation. But the best commentary upon them will be found in a passage of the sixth book of Virgil, in which he applies the

<sup>1</sup> "In Julio," c. 79.

<sup>2</sup> "In Oct.," c. 95.

prophecy definitively to Augustus himself, and speaks of it as well known—

“Hic ‘vir,’ hic est, tibi quem promitti sæpius audis,<sup>1</sup>  
 Augustus Cæsar, Divi genus: aurea condet  
 Sæcula qui rursus Latio, regnata per arva  
 Saturno quondam; super et Garamantas et Indos  
 Proferet imperium: jacet extra sidera tellus,  
 Extra anni solisque vias, ubi cœlifer Atlas  
 Axem humero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum.  
 Hujus in adventum jam *nunc* et Caspia regna  
 Responsis horrent divâm, et Mæotia tellus,  
 Et septemgeminæ turbant trepida ostia Nili.”—v. 791.

But he had already, nearly thirty years before, in the fourth Eclogue, but with more indefinite application, celebrated the coming era, in words admitted to have been derived from Isaiah; and which, at all events, distinctly prove what I am now endeavouring to show;—that, at the time when he wrote, an opinion prevailed, and was known to all his readers, that some new era was about to arise, and that all wars would cease throughout the world, and all nations be at peace—in which the lion would no longer vex the folds; when the serpent would be slain, and no poisonous herbs spring forth:—all which blessings he promises on the faith of current and well-known prophecies. Prophecies of a similar import are stated by Suetonius and Tacitus to have prevailed all over the East, at the time preceding the Jewish war; and are distinctly asserted both by them, and especially by the very competent Josephus, to have been the exciting cause

<sup>1</sup> The more vague “*nascens puer*,” an infant to be born to Octavia, or to Pollio, had now become “*hic vir*.” It might be politic to utilize, and so neutralize, dangerous rumours, by appropriation to the person of the Prince. So perhaps dealt Josephus with Vespasian, to shield his afflicted nation from further evil surmise, when he offered the suggestion, that having risen to the empire in Judæa, he himself be the subject of the formidable prophetic rumour.—ED.

of the fatal rebellion, which ended in the destruction of the nation.

But there is evidence which would lead us to believe that the popular fermentation which ended so fatally for the Jews, had been of long standing in the world, and was not confined to Judæa. Suetonius tells us that one of the first acts of Augustus, upon assuming supreme authority in the empire (and when, of course, he must have been anxious to calm the passions which had been so greatly excited), was to collect together, from every quarter, the various prophecies by which the minds of the people were agitated. Of these, he publicly committed two thousand volumes to the flames; reserving only a selection from some, which bore the name of the Sibyls; and which last he ordered to be preserved with care, in a temple built by him in his own palace, for that express purpose. In accordance with this account of Suetonius, we learn from Tacitus, that by a decree of Augustus, no private persons were allowed to have any such collection of prophecies in their possession: a law which continued in force under the reign of Tiberius.

Source of  
this fore-  
boding was  
the Old  
Testament  
or Jewish  
books.

In all questions where great and important interests are concerned, the mind is naturally and properly jealous of admitting premises which are not demonstrably certain; and this is especially the case in a matter where the conclusions which we may draw affect the foundations of our belief or disbelief of revelation. But for such scruple, I do not think that a doubt would be entertained as to the true origin of the popular persuasion above adverted to:—of the fact of its existence there cannot be a doubt. “It was an ancient and constant opinion,” says Suetonius, “and founded upon a knowledge of some Divine decree,

that a person or persons would appear in Judæa, who should obtain the government of the world.”<sup>1</sup> “It was the persuasion of most persons,” says Tacitus,<sup>2</sup> “that the ancient books of the priests contained passages, which implied that the East would become powerful, and that those would arise in Judæa who should obtain the empire of the world.” Here we see, that the expectation to which Josephus refers,<sup>3</sup> and to which he ascribes the rebellion of the Jews,—of some person arising among them who would govern the world, ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας τὸς αὐτῶν ἄρξει τῆς οἰκουμένης,—is plainly one and the same with that expectation, which Suetonius says had long prevailed all over the East, and Tacitus speaks of, as an opinion commonly entertained. Now, as there can be no doubt as to the source from whence the Jewish belief arose, it does not seem to me that there is room for a second opinion as to the true origin of the heathen.

It is true that Virgil does not refer to the Jewish Scriptures, nor to the ancient books of the priests, as his authority for predicting that new and golden age, which he describes as being about to arise; but to the Cumæan Sibyl. And, therefore, it may be asked, by what right do we assume that he borrowed from Isaiah, seeing that Isaiah himself may have drawn from the same source? The answer is, that we have the writings of Isaiah in our hands, and are able to judge of their contents. Moreover, we are sure that they at least were composed some hundred years before the time when Virgil lived. But we know nothing of the books of the *Cumæan* Sibyl, except what we learn from the passages he has placed in her mouth; and

The Sibyl  
line  
oracles.

<sup>1</sup> “Vespas.” c. iv.

<sup>2</sup> “Hist.” v. 13.

<sup>3</sup> “De Bello,” vi. 5.

How did  
this know-  
ledge get  
beyond  
Judæa?

from these it is a matter almost of demonstration that either this Sibyl borrowed from Isaiah and the other Jewish Scriptures, or that these last were borrowed from the Cumæan or other books commonly assigned to the Sibyl.<sup>1</sup> In the last case, however, the objection will amount only to this—that the prophecies on which the expectations, both of the Jews and heathens, at the time of Christ's coming, were built, had been delivered to mankind in an age anterior even to that which is now assigned. But as our belief in historical facts is always more lively and complete when we are able to explain withal the process by which they came to pass and say how they happened, —it will be worth while to examine a question (very

<sup>1</sup> It is admitted that Virgil mainly drew from the *third* Sibylline book of an Alexandrian Jew, B.C. 165–70, where the place in the “Pollio” is found. There is in this but one allusion to Messiah as *ἄνθρωπος*, as with Philo in the “De Præmiis et Pænis,” who had the passage probably in his mind. It teems, however, with *millennial* matter, and awful but covert revindications of Asia (Judæa?) and on Rome (Gentile nations?). The circulation, however, through Gentile peoples of Sibylline rumour was far more ancient, and always matter of unquiet interest with governments. Hence the great importance attached to the Sibyllina by the Roman politicians. So in Aristophanes, Demos, the impersonation of the citizens, is quite misled and bemused. Ἄδει δὲ χρησμούς· ὁ δὲ γέρων Σιβυλλικᾶ, are the words. See effect of the sudden fact of the cessation of all such at the Christian era on so considerable a mind as Plutarch, who was a student at Delphi at that time (A.D. 61).

Indeed, all the primordial societies seem to have been permeated, one hardly knows whence, providentially it may be, with forecasts of ultimate catastrophes, return of golden times, heroic deliverers; but the traces of this myth or legend of the Sibyl seem to vanish at last in Ionia, where also lived the Ephesian Heraclitus, whose remarkable dictum survives.

Few things, however, are more dark than the relations between Palestine, or Phœnicia, with the West before Herodotus.

A plausible etymology comes down to us in Σιὸς βόλλα, Doric for Διὸς βουλή: it is accepted without remark by Liddell and Scott.—Ed.



nearly connected with the history of Christianity, though touching but slightly on the evidence for its truth), which can hardly fail to occur to our minds, when inquiring into the knowledge possessed by the heathens of the Jewish prophecies ; and that is,—How are we to account for the possession of this knowledge on the part of the nations ?

If we examine the prophetical parts of the Old Testament, we shall observe that by far the largest portion is taken up with matter which relates solely to Judæa. But the books of Isaiah and Daniel offer an exception to this remark. Only a small proportion of the contents of these is occupied with the Jews or their affairs. The leading subject with these is the calling of the Gentiles and the future triumphs of the Church ; or else, the particular judgments of God against the several nations of whom the Gentile world was composed. It is the destruction of Tyre and Babylon—the desolation of Moab, and Edom, and Ammon—the degradation of Egypt—the rise of the several empires of the world and their respective terminations, which fill all those parts of the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel, that do not relate to the Gospel ; which last, we may remark, was a subject not concerning any one people in particular, but expressly referring to all nations of mankind. These last prophecies were delivered to the world, it is true, by the mouth of persons who were Jews ; yet, as it was the heathen nations, as the event has shown, who were the real objects of the Divine communication, rather than their own countrymen, it is to the former that we must consider these prophecies as having been properly addressed.<sup>1</sup>

The main subject of the two greatest prophets, Isaiah and Daniel, is the Gentile kingdoms.

<sup>1</sup> The successive fulfilment of these judgments uttered against the heathen states around were a perpetual earnest to Israel, as

For the events were mostly fulfilled long before the Advent, and so regarded the Gentiles only.

With respect to the events themselves which form the subject of the greater part of the writings of these two prophets, most of them, it will be observed (with the exception of some few particular predictions, the fulfilment of which has been gradual and is still going on), received their completion before the coming of Christ. Apparently, therefore, they have nothing to do with the proof of Christianity; or at least only by some distant and circuitous process of reasoning. The evidence by which we show that Jesus Christ was the Messiah is quite unconnected with the destruction of Babylon, or the wars of Alexander, and the subsequent division of his conquests among his chief captains. Under these circumstances, it is a natural question to ask:—What end did these particular prophecies serve? It is difficult to believe that they came from Heaven, and not suppose that they must have had an adequate object of some kind. This must be presumed, even if the purpose of them should remain hidden from our understanding. But certainly a satisfactory answer to the question I have asked will remove a difficulty which presses with some weight upon the mind, while examining this part of the Old Testament.

So that the purpose of these predictions would be preparatory only, since they

Now, whatever the end of these predictions was, it must be referred to some purpose which concerned, not the direct, but the *preparatory* evidences only of Christianity; seeing that otherwise they would not have related to events, which had already happened

well as for the outlying human race, that the great Adamic and Messianic, or (as Paul was first to point out) cosmopolitan prophecies would in due time be executed in like manner, or fulfilled, and so maintain them under all adversities, in the full assurance that the ultimate purpose for which Israel itself existed would, in God's time, be accomplished.—Ed.

many years before Christ came into the world, but to persons or things belonging to the epoch in or about which He appeared. But if the antecedent expectation of a Messiah among the *heathen* nations of the world was as important to the eventual reception by these of Christianity as the remarks contained in the last chapter would seem to indicate, a reason will at once suggest itself to our minds why these prophecies should have been inserted in the Old Testament. Assuming that they were written at the time asserted by the Jews (and which, except for their miraculous pretensions, no one would ever have called in question), it is easy to see how very largely a knowledge of them would have conduced to that widely spread inveterate and cosmical opinion, which every historian of the events relating to this period has spoken of in terms either more or less direct; and without the supposition of which, the success of Christianity (unless we ascribe it to the effect of an immediate miracle wrought upon the understandings of mankind in that age) is capable of no explanation which we are able to assign.

But with the testimony of history for our support, these prophecies guide our conjectures to an easy solution of the case. "Here," might the Jew say to the wiser Gentile with whom he conversed, "here is a book whose antiquity you acknowledge or may readily ascertain. In it we find a declaration, that He, of whom all the prophets of our nation have for ages spoken, is, in the fulness of God's appointed time, to make His appearance in the world. And the generation is now approaching, or is actually alive, in which this prophecy is to be fulfilled. Do you accuse us of enthusiasm or superstition, or smile at the earnest and full reliance of faith with which our nation is now

referred only to things at that time befalling the Gentile cities.

But this notoriety would greatly aid the Jewish propaganda,

looking forward to the completion of this prediction? Take the book into your hand; it contains other predictions besides those which relate to 'the consolation of Israel:—predictions which relate to *you*, and such as yourselves may judge of. See how accurately all that has been spoken of yourselves has been fulfilled: how wonderfully everything has actually come to pass, among the kingdoms and princes of the earth, exactly in the order there foretold:—and then answer, whether you have not sufficient reason to expect with us that this unaccomplished Promise of a new kingdom which is to arise, and which is to bring with it a new age into the world, will also in like manner, and in the predicted time, no less certainly be fulfilled?"

since the reasoning with Gentiles would turn on matter of fact.

Such is the language in which a Jew might have addressed a Gentile. It is plain that the reasoning involved no controversial topic, but related simply to a question of fact, which those who lived before Christ could judge with fuller means of knowledge than we possess. If the books appealed to were really as ancient as the Jews pretended and believed; and if they contained the prediction of events, relating to many nations of the world besides their own, which had notoriously and confessedly been fulfilled;—in this case the conclusion did not depend upon any matter of opinion, but would equally have its effect upon the imagination of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile. Putting aside the truth of the prophecies in question,—if a large number of persons in every country and city believed them to be true, it will be enough to account for the fact related by Tacitus and Suetonius. And on the other hand, the importance of such a belief to the success of the Gospel, if we suppose it to have had God for its author, will

sufficiently explain the reason why the prophecies before us had been delivered.

But assuming this; or taking for granted that a knowledge of these prophecies, so far as it extended, would account for the existence of persuasion in the minds of many of the approach of some undefined change in the face of human affairs—yet how came this persuasion to be so widely spread? For this appears evidently to have been the case, from the testimony of the writers, whose words we have quoted.

The wide pre-existence of such persuasions is matter of history, and is the most probable cause of rapidity of propagation after fall of Jerusalem.

But if we suppose the fact to have had anything to do with the early history of Christianity, the *universality* of the presentiment in question seems to be properly a part of the hypothesis; for after the destruction of Jerusalem the propagation of Christianity was not slow or gradual; was not step by step; was not confined to any particular region or language; but, if we may place reliance upon the testimonies in our possession, was, as we have seen, suddenly diffused throughout the world. On this point there can be no dispute. The earliest document we have is a heathen document; and it informs us that, within little more than thirty years from the time when the Jewish form of worship was ostensibly abolished, a new religion had sprung out of its ashes; and that before the generation in which its Founder lived had passed away, this religion was become the established faith of all ranks and ages and conditions of men, in one of the remotest provinces of the Roman empire!

The difficulty here is in explaining the wide diffusion of the belief, which we suppose to have caused this change, and the simultaneousness of the effect. If we were to confine ourselves to the case of any particular city or district, it is plain that

Such report and wide diffusion of belief would be explained could we



suppose a vast number of Jews, or Judaized heathen, throughout the empire.

we should only have to assume a knowledge of the Jewish prophecies on the part of the inhabitants, and explain their possession of it by supposing that a large number of Jews resided among them—and we should at once have, if not a true, yet at least an adequate solution. In fact, the mere knowledge of the previous existence of a prophecy, such as that of the seventy weeks, would be enough, without any antecedent belief in its truth. For the destruction of Jerusalem was an event not to be mistaken, when it *happened*, though it might not be credited before; and many who were incredulous while the city was standing would *change* their opinion when it fell.

Let us, then, for the sake of argument, extend the hypothesis; and suppose that there *was* a colony of Jews living in every city of the Roman empire. In this case it would be as easy to understand the sudden and simultaneous rise of Christianity throughout a hundred cities and nations, as in one. In fact, we have before seen that, in such a case, it would be sudden and simultaneous, or not at all. If the prophecies had been known beforehand, and understood; that is, had been talked of and discussed, and debated, in Rome, and Alexandria, and Antioch, and in every considerable city of the ancient world, before the coming of Christ,—then, whether we suppose them to have been generally believed or disbelieved, will be a matter of little importance. If they were fulfilled; if that which men had derided beforehand, and supposed to be only the dream of folly or enthusiasm, actually came to pass, and that under circumstances which left no doubt of a miraculous providence,—the effect, on this hypothesis, as when light is put to a combustible train, must have been visible and instantaneous;

and that, not at this place or city only, or in that particular country, but in many places, and cities, and countries, at what may be said to be one and the same time.

“As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be,” were the words of Christ. No prediction was ever uttered which corresponded more truly with the event. Nor is there any common fact in history of which we could give a more satisfactory explanation, on acknowledged principles of reasoning, than the sudden rise of Christianity in the world, provided we may assume that a knowledge of the great and leading *prophecies* of the Old Testament was generally diffused among mankind at the time immediately preceding the period of their final completion. That is to say, in other words, provided it could be shown that, at the time of this great event, there was in every considerable city of the known world, not one or two individuals, but a large body of individuals with such prophecies in their hands, or minds at least, and implicitly believing that the time of their fulfilment was then at *hand*.

“Like lightning,”  
said the  
Lord.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VAST NUMBERS, AND WIDE DISPERSION OF THE JEWS.

General dispersion of the Jews—Philo—Knowledge of the Gentiles—Supposition—Causes of the spread of Christianity—These causes the subject of previous prophecy.

Fact of in-  
numerable  
Jewish  
colonies  
shown by  
Philo,

IN proof of the fact hypothetically assumed at the end of the last chapter, it will not be necessary to resort to any conjectural reasoning. It is well known, in a general way, that before the coming of Christ, as in the present day, the Jewish nation was not confined to any one particular country. But the extent of their dispersion through all parts of the world, and the importance which they derived from their numbers, in all the chief cities, both of the East and elsewhere, at the time I am now speaking of, can only be imperfectly understood by the mere classical reader. The fact itself, indeed, may be partly inferred, not only from the Roman historians, but from Cicero and Juvenal. It is, however, not necessary to avail ourselves of their, or of any indirect, testimony ; because, among the writings of Philo, there are two books, one entitled, “ΕΙΣ ΦΛΑΚΚΟΝ,” and the other “ΠΕΡΙ ἈΠΕΤΩΝ,” in the course of which, while discoursing of other matters, he speaks of his nation, in terms which place the subject which we are now considering in a very strong point of view. In order to understand

the passage which I am about to quote, it will be convenient to say a few words respecting the occasion of it.

Among other extravagant acts of Caligula, one was <sup>in his report to Flaccus,</sup> a command to the Jews, that his statue should be placed in the temple of Jerusalem; and the resistance to this order is stated by Tacitus as having given rise to the war which ended in their destruction. On this point Tacitus differs from Josephus, who gives another account of the origin of the war; and an examination of dates will immediately show that the latter was right, and not the Roman historian. In point of fact, the statue, though placed in a synagogue, never was put up in the temple itself, nor was *this* outrage ever actually committed. But so great was the consternation which the bare contemplation of such an act of daring impiety created in the breasts of the nation—not in Judæa only, but in other places—that the Jews of Alexandria sent an embassy to Caligula, consisting of Philo and two others, hoping to make such a representation of the consequences as would prevail upon him to change his resolution. The two writings of Philo above mentioned contain a full and particular relation of the whole of the events connected with the transaction: the first being an account of the causes which led to the embassy which he had filled; and the second, containing a history of the embassy itself. The whole forms a very curious narrative, extremely well written, and throws much light upon the condition of the provinces, under the government of the Romans. But our present concern is with the statements which we find in it, illustrative of the numbers and importance of the Jews at that period. As it is an account of things at that time familiarly known, and not of events long since past; and as the truth or

falsehood of Philo's statements must have been open to every reader, there can be no reason for suspecting him of any intentional exaggeration.

Million of  
Jews in  
Alexan-  
dria.

He tells us that Alexandria was inhabited by two races of people (and the rest of Egypt the same), viz. by Egyptians and Jews; and that not less than one million of the latter lived in Alexandria and in that part of the country which extended from the plains of Libya (*καταβαθμὸς Λιβύας*) to the boundaries of Ethiopia. He then goes on to detail the populousness of his nation, as spread through the world; <sup>1</sup> observing that, on account of their multitudes, no single region was capable of containing them. Of the five divisions into which Alexandria was divided, distinguished by the five first letters of the alphabet, they occupied two. At Rome, the whole of that part of the city which was on the other side of the Tiber was also inhabited by his countrymen, of the race called Libertini; the descendants of those who had been made captives in war, and had obtained their manumission. In another part, speaking of the alarm which was created throughout the East, when the orders of Caligula were first received, "Petronius, the proconsul," says Philo, <sup>2</sup> "reflected in his mind upon the endless multitude of this people, which is not contained like other nations within any fixed limits, but is spread throughout the whole habitable globe. 'For it is dispersed,' said he to those about him, 'through all the provinces, both of the continent and the islands, so as almost to equal the indigenous inhabitants (*ὥς τῶν αὐθιγενῶν, μὴ πολλῶ τινι δοκεῖν ἐλαττοῦσθαι*).'"

They

But besides the alarm which Philo tells us Petronius

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II. pp. 523-525, ed. Mangey.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II. p. 577.



expressed, at the recollection of the number of the Jews, in the countries immediately adjacent to Palestine, he was especially moved, when he also reflected on the swarms who dwelt beyond the Euphrates; "for he knew that Babylon, and many other of the satrapies, were almost possessed by this nation." A few pages further on we have the letter of Agrippa to Caligula, in which he is writing officially, as a public officer, to the head of the government; and this has even stronger expressions. "Jerusalem," he says, "is indeed my country, but it is the metropolis not of one region, but of many: of Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, and the chief parts of Asia, as far as Bithynia, and the most remote shores of the Euxine." He reminds Caligula that the Jewish nation are equally numerous in Europe; "Thessaly, Bœotia, Corinth, Peloponesus, the whole of Greece, the continent, as well as the islands of Eubœa, Cyprus, Crete, being full of Jewish colonists. I say nothing," he adds, "of the Trans-Euphratensian provinces, all of which, except a small part, are inhabited by the same nation. So that, in showing favour to the Jews of Jerusalem, in the affair of the statue, he would be able to obtain the gratitude, not of one state or city, but of many states and many cities, scattered far and wide through Europe, Asia, and Africa—the inhabitants of islands and continents both inland and maritime."

swarm in  
Eastern  
regions;

also in  
Greece  
and Le-  
vant.

Now, unless these writings of Philo are fabricated (a supposition which it cannot be necessary to refute), no further evidence need be adduced, in proof of the fact, on which this part of our reasoning is built. If much of the readiness of assent to Christianity, on the part of the heathen nations of antiquity, as compared

A con-  
clusion  
established  
from Philo  
alone.

with its reception among the heathen nations now in the world, may be accounted for, by assuming a knowledge of the Jewish prophecies, on the part of the former, which the latter are without:—then, I think, we may at once stand upon our conclusion. It is then certain, from the direct evidence of history, that the Gentile part of the world were informed of the existence of these writings; and were there even no historical proof of the fact, the contrary supposition, with these passages of Philo before us, would be incredible.

This, it  
might be  
urged,  
would, at  
best, be a  
fact, but  
proves  
nothing  
Divine,

It might, perhaps, seem that this account of the motives by which I am supposing the wide and rapid reception by mankind of Christianity to have been originally determined (or perhaps, as I should rather say, of the mean by which the *attention* of cotemporaries to the proofs which had been provided of Christ's Divine mission was originally excited), differs in circumstantials only from the hypotheses offered by Gibbon; for, so far as recourse to *secondary* causes is concerned, the explanations seem in the main the same. Admitting even, it might have been urged on the adverse side, so much as that, at the point of time when Christ appeared, the nations really *were* on the look out for some great Comer—a thought common at the same time to the Jews sojourning among them—this alone need not have been miraculous, or an express work of Providence. It would evince no more than the fact that there lay in the state of men's minds at that epoch, such preparatory disposition for a great religious movement as had never before been witnessed, nor could again. It might even have been pleaded that there would be no reason why a person who should deny the divineness of Christ's revelation need object to recognize the existence of such con-

ditions as are alleged for its sudden and wide acceptance. For this, whatever its origin, is, so far, mere matter of fact, and thus might well pass as the immediate occasion of the spread of the revelation, whether we suppose the prophecies by which the expectation had been created, to have been Divine illuminations, or mere reveries with no better foundation than popular rumour and credulity. So much, then, might have been said.

It is just so: the success of Christianity, its rapid propagation, and its occupation of the world, *are* historical *facts* not to be disputed; as is also the no less singular fact of the wide diffusion of Judaism by which I have endeavoured, in great measure, to explain the great success. Taken, perhaps, in the *abstract*, the explanation as presented is just possibly compatible with a disbelief in any *Divine* authority of its Founder;—this may be admitted. But if it be further asserted, which *we* do, that the original Hebrew prophecies themselves, out of which the vast success of Christianity grew, were by no means the mere *dreams* of enthusiasm, but were the oracles of the Lord Himself;—that the particular disposition of temporal events, by means of which the matter couched within these prophecies had been spread abroad in the world, was *not* an accidental effect, but one that had been concerted many centuries before in heaven, and which had been miraculously brought about by the direct interposition of Providence:—here an entirely new question presents itself to the reflecting mind. For thus the point which we have to determine is not what in mere fact the preceding causes were; but what the *nature* of those causes was,—whether *themselves* were natural or *Divine*?

or has no  
more value  
*per se*, than  
matter of  
fact.

True—and  
however  
strange the  
facts, the  
hand of  
God in  
them has  
yet to be  
proved,

for though this world-wide persuasion, and the diffusion also of Israel, be not necessarily miraculous, yet, as connected with a Revelation, it is interesting to inquire whether they came of chance or Providence.

There was, perhaps, nothing properly miraculous in the so very singular fact of mankind believing, at the time when Christ appeared, that nature itself was "in labour" (to use the expression of Suetonius), and that she was about to bring forth a King, whose empire would extend over all the known world. Neither was there anything miraculous *per se* in the mere fact of Jews being found at Rome and Antioch, and in all the principal cities of the world. But if it should appear that this notorious persuasion of mankind, and this dispersion of a particular nation through all the other nations, were but the secondary and instrumental and proximate causes of the establishment of a religious institution in the world, which, from that time to the present, has been believed by all to be Divine, it then does become a matter of deepest interest to inquiring minds, competent to reflection, whether those facts were the incalculable results of what not, or were part of a wide and *providentially* concerted scheme in human or cosmic interests.

The existence in general of Providence is admitted, but it is hard to *verify* a particular instance unless this be *pre-dicted*.

It is evident that a thousand things may happen in the world, which have been seen or prepared long before by Deity, with a view to designs which are to be accomplished in ages yet to come; and it is consistent with the soundest principles of reason to believe that no event can happen which is not, in an enlarged sense of the word, part of some such providential plan. But when we descend from this general proposition to particular facts, we have then no certain compass to go by; none, at least, which we can demonstrate to be certain, and to which we can legitimately challenge the assent of other minds. In the works of the visible creation there are the positive data, from which we may often infer the meaning and

intention of the great Original, by infallible proofs ; but in the operations of God's moral government, we can only guess at the final or ideal causes of events ; our firmest convictions will, after all, be based upon opinion only or on confident persuasion. As I have before had occasion to remark, the past intentions and future designs of God can never be properly *demonstrated* by mere reasoning from the event. Be they of what nature they may, our own knowledge is confined to what we experience. We may know the immediate cause of the rebellion of the Jews against the Romans ; and we are sure that the consequence of that rebellion was the destruction of their city ; but there is no secular or human source of knowledge from which we could pretend to say what was God's reason for bringing this event to pass:—*that* could never have been known except by revelation. Assume, however, that this event had been the subject of a prophecy delivered through Israel to mankind many hundred years before it was fulfilled—and then the question will wear an aspect entirely new. On this supposition, not only the event itself, when it is seen, will become a miracle, *ipso facto*, but every consequence, even, directly and necessarily arising out of it, will also be invested with a miraculous character.

Now, I am here prepared to say that the case just supposed gives a true and exact statement of what the case of Christianity was, as it actually stood, in the age of which we are now speaking. We do not, indeed, find in secular history any formal account of the causes of its success at its first promulgation ; but we know that there was a prevailing expectation in many parts of the world at that particular period of some approaching event, which nearly concerned the

These prevalent rumours would go far to explain adhesion of the nations.



future condition of mankind ; and that this state of feeling had its origin in the diffusion of *prophecies* from the Old Testament. With this *datum* in our hands, we are able to explain the fact—that the Gospel found a readier reception among the nations of antiquity than our experience of its effects in missions to the heathen in the present day would have enabled us to anticipate. It is likewise nearly certain that this effect was caused by the minute dissemination of Israel at that particular period, through almost every city and kingdom in the then known world. All this we learn from history ; but we learn nothing more.

But in the Old Testament we have not only explanation of this persuasion, but verification of hand of God,

On turning to the Old Testament, however (which was the very instrument by means of which the minds of mankind had been prepared to embrace the doctrines which have since formed the religious conviction and practice of nearly half the world), we find that this dispersion<sup>1</sup> of the Jewish people is the subject of the earliest, as well as of the longest and clearest prophecy, which the volume contains. In determining whether the rise of Christianity in the world was the effect of natural and secondary causes, or the result of events purposely contrived by God, we are, therefore, not called upon to enter into any critical argument, but simply to examine a few passages in this book of the Pentateuch, and form our opinion upon a point easy to be judged. There is no room for discussion as to the general meaning of the prophetic words ; still less, if possible, as to its punctual fulfil-

<sup>1</sup> L. might seem here to confound the *present* with the *previous* διασπορά mainly caused by the Assyrian invasions of Palestine, for it is this *last* alone that could have contributed to the *original* reception of the Gospel.—ED.

ment;—the only debatable question is, whether it be possible to suppose that it came true by chance?

But before this question is determined in the sense of chance or fate, there is a point which I hope will be previously observed and pondered: for it relates to the subject-matter of the prediction. Any person who reads the narrative, which Josephus has left us, of the events which marked the siege of Jerusalem (which forms the most material feature of the prophecy relating to the dispersion of the Jews, and is part of the event which it is speaking of), and would weigh the greatness of the catastrophe, unspeakable in comparison with any similar event recorded in history, will see that it stands alone in the annals of mankind, for it is neither like nor second to any calamity, which, either before or since, ever fell upon the people of any nation. When Tacitus comes to that part of his history in which he has to relate this event, the expression which he uses marks how deep an impression it had made upon his imagination. "*Sed quia fumosæ urbis supremum diem tradituri sumus, congruens videtur, primordia ejus aperire.*"—"Supremum diem!" There was no metaphor in this phrase; the words were literally true. It was "the last day" of one of the greatest and most renowned cities in the world,<sup>1</sup> which Tacitus was about to record; and there is perhaps no parallel event in history, to which the same expression could, with so little exaggeration, have been applied. It is almost unnecessary for me to remark, that a similar observation may be made even more pointedly still, upon the state of dispersion among other nations, in which the Jews since that

especially in Deuteronomy, where *two* improbable events—utter destruction of city, and yet indestructible persistence of Jews—combined in one prophecy, 1500 years before—are shown, by the very fact, to have come from none but the Lord Himself.

<sup>1</sup> "Orine, in qua fuere Hierosolyma," says Pliny, "longè clarissima urbium Orientis, nec Judææ modo."—"Hist." v. 70.

time have always lived. Putting aside the persecutions they have endured, the persevering obloquy and injustice of which they have been for so many ages the unresisting victims (and which no historian can describe in words more exact than those of inspiration) ;—yet the subsistence itself of the strange nation among us, even to the present day, preserving as they do all their customs and peculiarities, and mixing, as in the beginning, only with each other—is an event which we may not perhaps be allowed to call miraculous,<sup>1</sup> but which is certainly unparalleled. Now that two such events as these should be foretold in one and the same prophecy, and both of them come literally to pass—and this by chance—is a proposition really more improbable than would be the truth of the Christian revelation itself ; or, indeed, than almost any abstract proposition not directly contrary to our reason.

But, to return to the observation that the evidence on which our own faith in the Gospel revelation is *now* built, is altogether independent of any explanation respecting the proximate causes, temporal or otherwise, of its first rapid propagation in the *Roman* world ; nor would it affect now the legitimacy of *our* belief, if this particular prophecy were dropped from the sacred volume.

The reader may remember an observation of Paley, which was quoted at the commencement of my introductory chapter, in which he says, “ *I can hardly imagine to myself a more distinguishing mark, and consequently a more certain proof of design, than*

<sup>1</sup> The event may or may not have been *per se* miraculous, but taken with the prediction of time, place, circumstance, there accrues to the Seer himself the credit of miraculous mental conditions of the *first order*.—ED.

But, to return to the original point of departure, these things are not matters of such absolute faith to us.

For to ourselves the Hand of God is evinced in now completed purpose, or in Christendom ; whereas to Israel the Divine design of

preparation, *i.e. the providing of things beforehand, which are not to be used until a considerable time afterwards; for this implies a contemplation of the future, which belongs only to intelligence.*" "Nat. Theol." ch. 14. the Gospel had to be made good by prophetic and miraculous facts.

The justice of this axiom, as applied to the proofs of natural Religion, admits of small debate; nor can I see why it is not equally certain, when applied to the truth of a Divine Revelation. The contrivance of a scheme—manifesting a prospective preparation—of effects to be afterwards developed, is, when *completed*, as plain an evidence of intelligence and design in the one case as in the other.<sup>1</sup> Whatever question there may be, must affect the proof only of the facts alone, but not the principle of the reasoning.

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of design in this case—and indeed in the organization of any creature—means evidence of correspondence with the Divine Idea; but we are fain to use phenomenal phrase, since the most advanced of mortal 'thinkers,' supposing him to *think*, can do so only under conditions of time; an aid, indeed, to thought, and yet, if he be wise, a caution in high matters. —Ed.

THE END.





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